MAHATMA GANDHI—THE LAST PHASE

By the Same Author

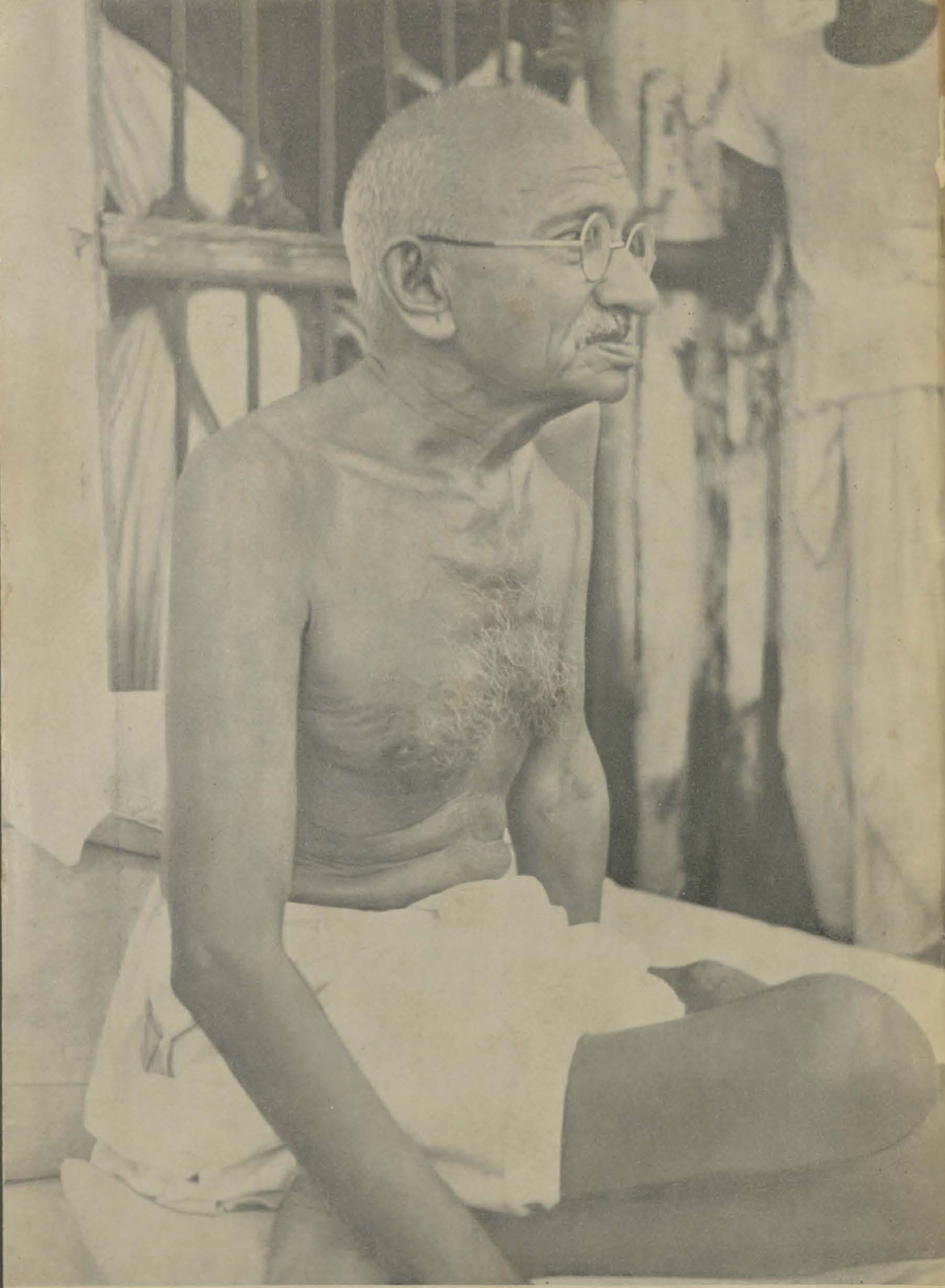
THE EPIC FAST

STATUS OF INDIAN PRINCES

A PILGRIMAGE FOR PEACE

A NATION-BUILDER AT WORK

GANDHIAN TECHNIQUES IN THE MODERN WORLD



Gandhi Films Committee

" Where he sat was a temple, where he walked was hallowed ground."

—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

MAHATMA GANDHI
THE LAST PHASE

VOLUME II

by

PYARELAL

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PREFACE

It is with a feeling of relief and thanksgiving, not unmixed with a certain regret, that with this volume I bring my labour on *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, extending over nearly eight years, to a close. It was no mean solace and privilege to live through over again what is recorded in these pages.

The first twenty chapters of this volume were printed and the rest of the manuscript was ready in draft before the close of 1956. I had intended to devote only a short chapter to the subject matter dealt with in chapters 21 and 22. But when I sat down to analyse and explain the significance of what filled the last days of Gandhiji's life, I found that a perfunctory treatment would not do. The alternative was to leave out and reserve for full treatment separately the exposition embodied in these chapters. But then I found that I had, in the portion that had been printed already, committed myself to a full discussion of the subject in the pages to follow. There was, therefore, no other go but to do it.

Turning over these pages, however, I feel that this was perhaps as well. To send out the concluding volume of *The Last Phase* without these chapters would have been like presenting Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark.

Gandhiji disliked heartily being placed on what he used sardonically to call the "icey heights of the Himalayas", to be worshipped from afar, admired from a distance, but not to be followed or lived with. He was not in the habit of indulging in abstract thinking. His was essentially a *philosophy* in action. It becomes a meaningless fetish to pay homage to the personality of such a man leaving out his practice. To treat Gandhiji's economic, social and political outlook and activities as a matter of mere detail, to dismiss them as something ephemeral that has ceased to have any validity for us after the attainment of Independence, is to make nonsense of all that he wore his soul out to realise. His economic, political and social activities were an expression and an integral part of what was fundamental in him. One cannot accept the one and reject the other. He left no doubt as to what he wanted India to realise, and through India the world. To the last he continued to proclaim his faith in Khadi and Charkha, manual crafts, the village way of life, and the values these stand for, in short the ideal of Sarvodaya — "unto this last" — i.e. denying oneself what could not be shared with

the least, and his distrust of much of what today we pride ourselves in as "progress". A few months before his death, he declared that he would continue to proclaim his faith and speak to us even from the grave. We, therefore, owe it to him and to ourselves to understand what it was that he wanted to speak about even from the grave.

Some of his forebodings recorded in these pages have already materialised. The ruinous race for armaments between India and Pakistan; exploitation of Indo-Pak tension by the power blocs; the abortive attempts in our country to go back on the abolition of the salt tax and on prohibition; continuation of the evil practice of filling Government coffers by revenue from betting and gambling on race-tracks; inter-Provincial feuds and the feuds over the language question; the attempts by the educated *elite* to sabotage the replacement of English by Hindustani as the lingua franca of India; the danger more and more of the voice of the people being drowned by the noise of the "pundits" in the planning of the people's lives; and last but not least the steady attempt to make India military-minded symbolised by the crowning irony of the official annual ceremony with arms at Rajghat on the 30th January to pay homage to the Apostle of Peace—all these have become stark realities. We must know and understand what further lies at the end of this road. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

I have, therefore, taken the calculated risk of incorporating the two chapters in question as also the Epilogue in the present volume. This has delayed the publication of the book and also added to its bulk. The reader, however, who does not want the story interest to be held up, can, at the first reading, skip these two chapters, or perhaps one—chapter 21.

To help the reader to pick up the thread of the story spread over two volumes, cross references have been provided wherever necessary. A considerable mass of supporting material, important in itself, has been put into "Notes" at the end, so as not to encumber the argument.

As before, I have to apologise to the reader for some printing errors that have crept in in spite of the best care. The bulk of them have been hand-corrected. In addition, on page 74, line 7 from bottom, please read "two-year old grandson" instead of "four-year old grandson"; omit the words "at midnight" in line 7 on page 198; "28th May" in line 11 from bottom on page 199 should read as "31st May"; "30th July" on page 281 as "30th June"; and "Eric Morgan" on page 563 as "Griscom Morgan". On page 579, in the penultimate para, I had quoted Gandhiji from memory. I have since lighted upon the actual quotation in Dr. Radhakrishnan's *The Great Indians*. I have, therefore, great pleasure in reproducing it here. It reads: "The British want to put the struggle on the plane of machine guns. They have weapons and

we have not. Our only assurance of beating them is to keep it on the plane where we have the weapons and they have not."

General acknowledgment has been made in the first volume for help received from various friends in the preparation of the book. In addition my special thanks are due to Richard Gregg and Saint Nihal Singh for the interest they took in finalising the manuscript of this volume.

AHMEDABAD, PYARELAL

FEBRUARY 12, 1958

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I believe in the absolute oneness of God and, therefore, of humanity. . . . I cannot, therefore, detach myself from the wickedest soul nor may I be denied identity with the most virtuous.

MAHATMA GANDHI

MAHATMA GANDHI—THE LAST PHASE

Part One
PARTING OF THE WAYS

CHAPTER I

THE SHADOW OF PARTITION

1

IT WAS the month of March, 1947. Gandhiji had been in Bihar nearly a week, battling with all his strength to bring together the sundered hearts of Hindus and Muslims in that riot-torn Province so that they could once again live together as brothers in the land of their birth, when by a stroke of irony he saw in the papers the Congress resolution demanding the partition of the Punjab. It was as if the abyss had suddenly opened under his feet. He had not been consulted or even forewarned. "I think I did not know the reason behind the Working Committee resolution," he wrote to Pandit Nehru on the 20th March. "I cannot understand it," he wrote to Sardar Patel.

What had made the Congress High Command, to whom the very idea of the partition was an anathema, forsake the ideal of undivided India for which they and the Congress had toiled and sacrificed without even a formal reference to their erstwhile oracle? What made them ask for the partition not only of the Punjab and Bengal but ultimately of India itself in the teeth of his considered advice?

The explanation has to be looked for partly in the situation with which the Congress High Command found themselves confronted in the Interim Government and in the country, partly in the widening gulf that had come to separate their outlook from Gandhiji's, but above all in the realisation that was forced upon them that the logic of partition was inherent in the 20th February, 1947 declaration of the British Government, and the way indicated by the Father of the Nation to avert it, the bulk of Congressmen were not ready to follow.

"We are drifting everywhere," Pandit Nehru wrote to Gandhiji in the second week of February, 1947, "and sometimes I doubt if we are drifting in the right direction. We live in a state of perpetual crisis and have no real grip of the situation."[1]

The country was sick of the political stalemate. The Congress members in the Interim Government were deeply worried over the intrigues of the British officials and the continued obstructionism of the Muslim League. There was a lurking fear that if the present opportunity was missed, such a chance might not again arise for a long time to come and the British might not after all quit.

The British Government's declaration of 20th February, 1947, to complete the transfer of power not later than June, 1948, eased that fear. It was hailed by Pandit Nehru in a public statement as "a wise and courageous" decision.[2] The Constituent Assembly could now proceed with the work of framing a constitution of independence unhampered by the Muslim League's boycott or uncertainty as to Parliament's final attitude. In a letter to Gandhiji soon after the British announcement, Pandit Nehru wrote:

> It may not be exactly as we would have liked it. But the real thing is that they have finally decided and announced that they are quitting. Whatever their motives might be, they cannot go back on this and everything that happens from now onwards must be governed by it. The present position is that if the Muslim League comes into the Constituent Assembly, which is very unlikely, then the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 16th applies. Otherwise the limitations of that statement go and the Constituent Assembly functions really as a sovereign body without Sections and Groups and a limited Centre. But there is one limitation: that its decisions will apply only to the parts represented in it. More or less this was what you said when we met last.[3]

This was right so far as it went. The 20th February declaration, however, opened up the possibility of the division of India which was ruled out under the Cabinet Mission's Plan. To that extent it was a concession to the League's demand for "divide and quit" and was hailed by the League as such. Commented the London *Times*: "Muslim separatism is deriving encouragement from the language of the White Paper."[4] But this aspect of the question was for the time being pushed into the background in the first flush of Congress enthusiasm. The British Government's statement was sufficiently vague on this as on several other vital points, not to damp the general satisfaction with which it was hailed by the Congress and the Muslim League alike. To resume Pandit Nehru's analysis:

> This may result in the Indian Union being first established for the whole of India except Bengal, the Punjab and Sind. Of course the Union constitution will apply to or rather be open to all; but these Provinces may not choose to adhere to it. If so, the second question that arises is that those parts of Bengal and Punjab which are fully represented in the Constituent Assembly (Western Bengal and Southern Punjab) should be parts of the Union. That means a partition of the Punjab and Bengal. It is unlikely that Jinnah or the Muslim League will agree to this truncated Pakistan. . . . They will thus have to make a choice

ultimately between this and joining the Indian Union possibly on special terms. In other words, the position of Bengal and Punjab in such an event approximates to that of an Indian State.[5]

While refraining from giving its judgment on the declaration as a whole till the complete picture was before it, the Congress Working Committee reiterated its view that "the transfer of power, in order to be smooth, should be preceded by the *recognition in practice* of the Interim Government as a Dominion Government with effective control over the services and administration, and the Viceroy and Governor-General functioning as the constitutional head of the Government."[6] It further demanded that "the Central Government must necessarily function as a Cabinet with full authority and responsibility. Any other arrangement is incompatible with good Government and is peculiarly dangerous during a transitional period full of political and economic crises."[7] It reaffirmed its acceptance of the British Cabinet Mission's Plan of 16th May, 1946, with the interpretation put upon it by the British Government on 6th December, 1946, but emphasised that the basis of the Constituent Assembly was essentially voluntary. It was the fear of compulsion or coercion that had given rise to distrust and suspicion and conflict. If that fear were removed, it would be easy to determine India's future so as to safeguard the rights of all the communities and give equal opportunity to all: "It has been made clear that the constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly will apply only to those areas which accept it. . . . Any Province or part of a Province which accepts the constitution and desires to join the Union cannot be prevented from doing so. Thus there must be no compulsion either way, and the people will themselves decide their future."[8]

In his letter of 24th February, 1947, written to Pandit Nehru before he had received Pandit Nehru's letter of that date, Gandhiji while giving his reaction to the latest British declaration had pointed out that a great deal would depend on: (1) What the Constituent Assembly could do, (2) What they as the Interim Government were able to do, and (3) Whether the British Government were sincere and could remain sincere. (See Vol. I, pages 565–66).

There were at this time Muslim League Governments only in two Provinces, viz. Bengal and Sind. In Sind the position of the Ministry was precarious, and it was being kept in office by continuous prorogation of the Provincial Assembly by the Governor. In Bengal the sentiment for a United Sovereign Bengal was growing and it was feared in Government circles that East Bengal might ultimately want to walk out of the Pakistan Plan.[9] In the Punjab a Unionist-Congress-Sikh Coalition Government was in power which cut across communal alignments and anti-Pakistan feeling was gaining strength.[10] If

the Muslim League boycott of the Constituent Assembly continued, Assam, North-West Frontier Province and non-League representatives from non-Muslim majority districts of West Bengal and East Punjab respectively, from Sections B and C under the Cabinet Mission Plan, would meet in the Constituent Assembly with representatives from Section A, as also representatives from some of the States. The constitution thus framed would automatically apply to areas fully represented in the Assembly and if it was eminently fair and generous, even a Province like the Punjab might be attracted to it. And if a United Bengal decided in favour of a sovereign role for itself, there would not be much left of the Pakistan plan, and partition might after all be averted.

A disquieting feature of the situation was the Muslim League's threat of violence in the Provinces. Everything, therefore, depended on the ability of the Interim Government to control the forces of disorder, which the Muslim League threatened to unleash as it had done in Bengal and more recently in the Punjab, and to enforce the rule of just law in the Congress Provinces so as to remove the legitimate fears of the Muslims, as for instance in Bihar. For that a strong, homogeneous Government at the Centre and effective control over the services and the machinery of administration were essential. An Interim Government split up into rival sections, each pulling against the other, and lacking effective control over the services would not be able to cope with the situation. The position of the League members in the Interim Government became in this context a matter of crucial importance.

The Congress took the view that the 20th February declaration of the British Government had not superseded the Cabinet Mission's Plan of 16th May, 1946. That plan still held. It had provided only a formula for an automatic solution of the Indian question, if by a certain date no agreed solution acceptable to the whole of India could be presented by the Constituent Assembly . The Muslim League representatives in the Interim Government must, therefore, either come into the Constituent Assembly, as required under the Cabinet Mission's Plan, or else go out of the Interim Government.

The British Government had shirked this issue so far. Would it now face it squarely and take necessary action?

This was what Gandhiji meant when he drew attention to the question of that Government's sincerity and its ability to remain sincere. The British policy had been, in Mr. Brailsford's words, to "cling . . . to the last keys of power" even "as they (had) kept the artillery in white hands after the Mutiny."[11] In pursuance of that policy the British power had held back three trump cards pending the transfer of power, viz. (1) control over the services, (2) Paramountcy, and (3) control over the armed forces. These could be used to disrupt

or to cement. The question was: Would the Viceroy and the Governors use their vast powers to promote India's disruption or to avert it? Would they either themselves govern or let others govern during the transitional period, or would they let the dynamite pile up under the foundation, while maintaining a pose of disinterested impartiality, and from their vantage ground bargain, now with the one, then with the other party, till both were forced to accept the solution which neither of them really liked and which was detrimental to the interests of both? "We don't yet know," wrote Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji,

> what special directive has been given to Mountbatten by the British Cabinet. Logically this should be to function as a constitutional head only and to allow the Government to act as a Dominion Government. That would mean the Government having a leader. This again would bring matters with the Muslim League to a head.[12]

The British Government did neither. Nor did the Congress press its demand further at the time as it was anxious to make a last attempt to bring the Muslim League into the Constituent Assembly. Pandit Nehru's letter continued:

> Our general outlook at present is to approach privately some of the Muslim League leaders and try to induce them to come into the Constituent Assembly. If they refuse to come in, then the question of their remaining in the Interim Government has to be faced afresh. For the moment we are not pressing for their resignation as this would of course put an end to all talk of cooperation. But anyhow this matter should be settled one way or the other in the course of the next month.

Accordingly, the Congress Working Committee invited afresh the Muslim League to join in the work of drawing up a constitution and asked the League to nominate its representatives to meet representatives of the Congress in order to consider the situation arising out of the impending transfer of power.

While the Congress thus procrastinated hoping against hope for the League's cooperation, the Muslim League proceeded to take time by the forelock. As early as 28th November, 1946, the London *Times* had editorially observed:

> The British cannot consent to hand over responsibility to a single political party without reference to the rights of other groups, or place the Governments of Muslim-majority Provinces at the unfettered discretion of a Hindu-controlled Central

Government. If the kind of agreement which is represented by the State Paper cannot be secured, *the unity of India which is a great achievement of the past century must inevitably be sacrificed to the higher interests of elementary justice.*[13] (Italics mine).

The Muslim League was well aware of this trend of British thought as also its strength. Ever since the failure of the London talks in December, 1946, the Muslim League knew more or less as a certainty that the Cabinet Mission Plan would not be proceeded with if the Muslim League's boycott of the Constituent Assembly continued. It had sufficient data further to know that in that event power, in areas not represented in the Constituent Assembly, would be transferred to the Governments in office at that time in those areas. In the context of the 20th February declaration of H.M.G. this meant that if the kind of agreement laid down in the State Paper by a "fully representative" Constituent Assembly was not achieved by June, 1948, power might be transferred to the Congress Government of Dr. Khan Saheb in the North-West Frontier Province and to the non-League Unionist-Congress-Sikh Coalition under Malik Khizar Hayat Khan in the Punjab. The Muslim League therefore reacted to the British Government's declaration of 20th February by taking it as a signal for a renewed attempt to dislodge the non-League Ministries in the Provinces claimed by it for Pakistan and to instal League Ministries in their place so that when the British would transfer power not later than June, 1948, the League Ministries would be recognised as "successor Governments" in terms of that declaration.

2

The Muslim League's Direct Action programme to overthrow the existing Ministries mainly affected three Provinces, viz. Assam, the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province.

After the 6th January resolution of the All-India Congress Committee, accepting the British Government's interpretation of the Cabinet Mission Plan, the Assam Chief Minister had declared that Assam was prepared to sit in the Section, but it asked for the same guarantee from the League as regards the work in the Section as the Muslim League demanded from the Congress in the Union constitution. The Assam Muslim League's reply to it was to resolve the very next day — 8th January, 1947 — to launch "Direct Action" against the Assam Government. The 20th February declaration of H.M.G. provided further impetus to this campaign and on 30th March, a decision to start "a civil disobedience movement" in all the districts of Assam was officially adopted by the Working Committee of the Assam Provincial Muslim

League, meeting at Shillong. But the Provincial Ministry was able to cope with the situation successfully and Assam was saved from a communal conflagration.

In the Punjab, Premier Malik Khizar Hayat Khan had all along resisted the pressure tactics of the Muslim League and refused to toe its line. Here also, when all constitutional methods of securing a Muslim League Ministry or a Ministry favourable to the League failed, recourse was had to violence. Soon after the League's Direct Action resolution of July, 1946, a Provincial Committee of Action was formed. The Muslim lawyers were asked to go forth as "shock troopers" and mobilise the masses in anticipation of the "coming struggle"; Muslim women were called upon to learn "first aid"; Muslim League National Guards were organised; they were provided with helmets purchased from the military "disposals"; put into uniforms and taught military drill. Many of them were equipped with firearms.[14] Organisation on militant lines was undertaken also by the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh. During December, 1946 and January, 1947, processions and parades of Muslim League National Guards in military formation began to be very much in evidence in the streets of Lahore.

The Provincial Government was alarmed at this rise of private armies and declared both Muslim National Guards and the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh as unlawful organisations in the last week of January. The Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh submitted to the order and allowed their premises to be searched and locked up. But the Muslim National Guards refused to allow the police to enter their premises. Seven top-ranking League leaders of the Province offered resistance when the police came to search their headquarters and were in consequence put under arrest. The search of the premises revealed, among other things, a dump of over a thousand steel helmets, quantities of uniforms and a mass of inflammatory propaganda literature.[15]

The next day, the League General Secretary, Liaquat Ali Khan, declared that the Muslim National Guards were an "integral part" of the Muslim League and an attack on them was, therefore, an "attack on the Muslim League". This was followed by a fierce agitation by the Muslim League in the Punjab, which was described by the Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government, Akhtar Husain, as being conducted with a "definite, undemocratic political motive". It resulted in numerous arrests including the arrest of seventeen League members of the Legislative Assembly. British troops had to be called out in the Provincial capital as a precautionary measure. The League's plan included interference with communications and a campaign of non-payment of taxes.

Following upon a compromise between the Punjab Government

and the Muslim League, in the last week of February, cases against the League leaders were withdrawn.[16] The ban on the Muslim National Guards and the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh was revoked two days later. Open defiance of law by the Muslim League, however, continued. But in the meantime the Coalition Government's inability to put down the League hooliganism with firmness had so embittered non-Muslim sentiment in the Punjab as to drive a wedge between the Unionist-Muslim and the Hindu-Sikh supporters of the Ministry. That was just what the League wanted. Four days later, the Punjab Premier, unable to resist the increasing pressure of the League and perhaps fearing that he could no longer rely upon the Hindu and Sikh support to his Ministry, resigned on the 2nd March. The League celebrated the occasion with illuminations. The Ministry, however, was asked to continue for the time being as a caretaker Government.

Events after that moved at a hectic pace. On 3rd March, Sir Evan Jenkins, the Governor of the Punjab, invited the Khan of Mamdot, the Leader of the Muslim League party in the Punjab Assembly, to form a Government. The latter accepted the invitation. The prospect of a Ministry being formed in the Punjab by a party that had openly avowed its intention of establishing Pakistan by force spread consternation among the non-Muslim sections in the Punjab.

Feeling the trap closing in upon them the Sikhs became desperate. Casting all discretion to the winds, the Panthic Akali Party adopted a resolution "to resist by every possible means" establishment of a Muslim League Government in the Province, so long as its objective was Pakistan or Muslim domination of the Punjab — the homeland of the Sikhs. On the 4th March, Hindus and Sikhs observed an anti-Pakistan day in Lahore. A procession was taken out by non-Muslim students in defiance of a prohibitory order. It was fired upon by the police and resulted in a number of casualties.

On the 5th March, the caretaker Government of Malik Khizar Hayat Khan resigned. As the Muslim League still could not muster together the requisite majority in the House to form an alternative Ministry, the Governor promulgated Section 93 of the Government of India Act, prorogued the Assembly and took over the administration of the Province. This served as a signal for an outbreak of widespread rioting by the Muslims in the cities of Amritsar, Rawalpindi and Multan, and in the rural areas of Rawalpindi, Multan and Jhelum districts in the Punjab as also in Abbottabad district of the North-West Frontier Province. The similarity of the pattern followed by the rioters in all these places again pointed to a deliberate and well-conceived plan. By mid-day of 19th March, 1947, according to a statement by Mr. Macdonald, the Chief Secretary to the Punjab

Government, the campaign launched by the Muslim League had cost in casualties 2,049 Hindus and Sikhs killed and 1,103 seriously wounded.[17] Even these figures were considered to be an under-estimate.

"I have seen ghastly sights and I have heard of behaviour by human beings," remarked Pandit Nehru after a visit to some of the riot-affected places, "which would degrade brutes. . . . If politics are to be conducted in this way, then they cease to be politics and become some kind of jungle warfare, which reduces human habitations to the state of a desert. . . . Let people struggle for their political aim if they want to, but they must do so as human beings with a measure of human dignity."[18]

These events provoked a strong reaction against the League even in the British conservative Press. Pointing to the dangers inseparable from "any attempt to enforce a communal dictatorship by unconstitutional agitation," the London *Times* commented on 11th March, 1947, that the danger was in no way lessened if the agitation was claimed to be based on "democratic principles".

"It is a curious feature of the campaign conducted in the Punjab by the Muslim League," the *Times* went on to say, "that a 56 per cent. Muslim majority in the Province enables it to invoke (democratic) principles, while it fiercely controverts them in other parts of India."

On the Congress side this led to a demand for the division of the Punjab. The Congress Working Committee's resolution on the Punjab ran as follows:

> During the past seven months India has witnessed many horrors and tragedies which have been enacted in the attempt to gain political ends by brutal violence, murder and coercion. . . .
>
> The Punjab . . . became six weeks ago the scene of an agitation, supported by some people in high authority, to coerce and break a popular Ministry which could not be attacked by constitutional methods. A measure of success attended this, and an attempt was made to form a Ministry dominated by the group that had led the agitation. This was bitterly resented and has resulted in increased and widespread violence. . . .
>
> The tragic events have demonstrated that there can be no settlement of the problem in the Punjab by violence and coercion, and that no arrangement based on coercion can last. Therefore it is necessary to find a way out which involves the least amount of compulsion. This would necessitate a division of the Punjab into two Provinces, so that the predominantly Muslim part may be separated from the predominantly non-Muslim part.[19]

In effect this was an eleventh hour attempt on the part of the Congress to wean the Muslim League from the principle of partition

by confronting it with the logical consequences of its doctrine if it persisted in its demand for the division of India. It was partly also an effort, in the event of India's partition, to salvage the non-Muslim majority area of that Province from Muslim League rule. If the League insisted on demanding partition, it could not in reason claim exemption from the application of that principle to areas it claimed for Pakistan. The assumption was that, confronted with the prospect of being left with a "truncated, moth-eaten" Pakistan, which it was too readily taken for granted would prove economically unviable, the League would not press its demand for partition. This was a very different approach from Gandhiji's. He never diplomatically made concessions he did not believe in. As it turned out, the Congress Working Committee's reading of the situation was wholly wrong.

No reply was sent by the League to the Working Committee's invitation to meet the Congress representatives beyond saying that the Congress proposal would "be placed before the next meeting of the Working Committee of the Muslim League." For this no date was fixed. And when a month later the Congress Secretary inquired when this meeting would be held, he was told that, in view of the discussions which had in the meantime been initiated by the new Viceroy, it was not likely that a meeting of the League Working Committee would be called "until a definite stage in the talks had been reached."

3

The tactics that had proved so successful in the Punjab were used with equal success in the North-West Frontier Province (N.-W.F.P.) too.

After the 16th May, 1946 statement of the Cabinet Mission, the Khan Brothers—Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his elder brother Dr. Khan Saheb, the Chief Minister of N.-W.F.P. — had made it known that they were not much concerned about the political aspect of Grouping. They had no objection to joining any Group or Section which was prepared to guarantee to the Pathans full freedom to develop along their own lines:

> I have no objection to be in one group with the Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan, but I must say this: that before entering into such a partnership all of us should sit like brothers and satisfy each other by removing certain doubts and assure one another that such grouping is in the interest of each Province. Some people give it a religious colour but that is not correct. What has religion got to do with it? This is an economic

> problem — a question purely of profit and loss. Nothing can be done by force. Even a father cannot compel his son these days.
>
> Apart from this, there is the second important question that requires attention — that of joining the Hindu-majority Provinces, when we are surrounded on all sides by the Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan. How can it be possible that we should ignore our own neighbour and over and above that neighbour's head join others? If we can ever form a Group, it can only be with the Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan and not with other Provinces, as all Hindu-majority Provinces are hundreds of miles away from us.[20]

But the League, instead of trying to reason with the Pathans, sought to bully them into submission and when that failed, to overthrow the Ministry in power by violence. And what could come more handy for this purpose than an appeal to communal passion? Unfortunately, the aftermath of the Bihar disturbances at this stage provided ready ammunition for it. Reported correspondent Colin Reid of the *Daily Telegraph*, London, to his paper from Peshawar: "*Agents provocateurs* from other Provinces have been stirring Muslim feelings here by displaying photographs of skulls and torn fragments of the Koran from Bihar."[21]

The cis-Indus districts of Hazara and Dera Ismail Khan in the N.-W.F.P. are non-Pushtu speaking areas. Psychologically and even in physical characteristics, the Muslims of Hazara and Derajat are more akin to the Punjab Muslims than to the Pathans from the North. Hazara district was the first to be affected by communal disturbances. On the 17th January, 1947, Sardar Patel reported to Gandhiji in Noakhali:

> In Hazara district, there are nine lakh Muslims. Hindus and Sikhs combined make thirty-one thousand. Out of these twenty thousand have already fled. The number of killed is from 40 to 50. There have been arson and loot on a wide scale. Bihar is being avenged in the Frontier. To begin with, batches of raiders came from across the border and indulged in loot, arson and murder at two or three places. But subsequently the havoc was wrought by local Muslims alone. All this is the result of propaganda by the League to avenge Bihar. The British officials are doing nothing to put out the conflagration. Some are even helping to fan it.

The second wave of disturbances came some time in the third week of February, 1947. In the month of January, a Sikh woman whose husband was murdered by the rioters was abducted and forcibly

married to a Muslim. Dr. Khan Saheb, the Chief Minister, on the strength of the findings of a Muslim magistrate, who was appointed to examine the woman, ordered that the woman be restored to her relatives. The Muslim Leaguers thereupon organised a procession to demand that she be handed back to the person to whom she had been forcibly married. The Deputy Commissioner of Mardan banned meetings and processions in the city for security reasons. Abdul Qayum Khan, the erstwhile Deputy Leader of the Congress Party in the Central Legislature, who had since joined the Muslim League, defied the order and was arrested on the 20th February. This was followed by a "civil disobedience" campaign against Dr. Khan Saheb's Ministry, for what was euphemistically styled as "vindication of civil liberties", after the pattern adopted in Assam and the Punjab. A number of Muslim League leaders were arrested by the authorities and sent to prison for defiance of the law and incitement to communal violence. The League next organised a campaign to paralyse the administration. Picketing of courts was resorted to, railway lines were blocked by unruly crowds. They tampered with the railway track and stoned the troops when ordered to disperse.

In Rawalpindi (Punjab) disorders commenced on the 5th March, 1947. There were killings, arson and looting. Two days later a train was held up and the passengers attacked near Taxila only a few miles away. This gruesome occurrence became painfully common feature later. About the same time, trouble started in the city and cantonment of Peshawar. Muslim Leaguers began to convert by force Hindus and Sikhs to Islam in the neighbouring villages.

The emergence in the Frontier Province of this ugly feature, for which Noakhali had already earned such notoriety, threw the non-Muslim population of Peshawar into a panic. For ten days they shut themselves in their homes, not venturing out into the streets. The budget session in the Frontier Assembly was then in progress. The Frontier Ministry, fearing that if they took drastic action to deal with the situation, the Governor might use it as an excuse for dissolving the Assembly, decided to lie low for the time.[22] As soon as the budget was passed, they met and decided to call in the Khudai Khidmatgars ("Servants of God", popularly known as Red Shirts, because of the brick-red colour of their uniforms). Whips were sent out in the evening, and about ten thousand of the Khidmatgars arrived in Peshawar the next day. They were posted at various danger points throughout the city. Their presence, though they — being pledged to non-violence — carried no arms, helped to restore confidence. The house doors that had remained closed for ten days flew open and the non-Muslim sections of the population were able to come out of their homes and go about their business with a sense of security once again.

In April, 1947, Dera Ismail Khan was in flames. About twelve hundred shops belonging to non-Muslims were destroyed by a large Muslim mob that invaded the city. The trouble spread in the villages. In some cases the entire non-Muslim population was killed or forcibly converted. The Frontier Constabulary present in the city did practically nothing and allowed the mob to proceed with its orgy of lawlessness unchecked.

But unlike the Punjab, in the Frontier communal violence failed to undermine the solidarity of Dr. Khan Saheb's Ministry. The authorship of the disturbances was too well-known and the non-Muslims in the N.-W. F. P. had long recognised that in the Khan Brothers lay their only hope and in the Khudai Khidmatgar organisation their sole guarantee of safety. But it had another equally unfortunate repercussion. Wrote Sardar Patel in a letter to Gandhiji after the Hazara disturbances:

> Badshah Khan has gone to Bihar, where nothing is happening. But he will do as he thinks fit. . . . Dr. Khan Saheb — the good soul that he is — is in a predicament. The League is making poisonous propaganda. But he is afraid to take strong action.[23]

Gandhiji was sorely troubled. To attribute lack of courage to Dr. Khan Saheb was not to know that lion-hearted leader or the realities in the Frontier Province. Values were changing fast under the impact of events. A fortnight later Gandhiji received the following letter from Pandit Nehru:

> I have found both in Bihar and elsewhere very little regret or remorse among the Hindus for what happened there. There is a feeling almost of justification. Among the Muslims there is definitely a fear, whether justified or not, that there might be further attacks on them.
>
> In Hazara in the N.-W.F.P. some horrible things were done though, of course, in point of extent and numbers there is no comparison whatever with Bihar. In quality or lack of it there is little to choose, to my mind, between Noakhali, Bihar, Meerut district and Hazara. They all represent utter degradation and depravity.[24]

But, whether they knew it or not, the whole galaxy of the Old Guard, like the galactic systems in outer space, were imperceptibly being drawn into a different sun-orbit — the orbit of Lord Mountbatten, the coming Viceroy. The different settings in which they and Gandhiji had been functioning of late had differently conditioned their thinking, outlook and approach. Gandhiji's was the redemptive

way. He represented the non-violent approach which has its own logic. Unless true repentance manifested itself in Bihar, irrespective of what was happening in other parts of India, the hearts of Hindus and Muslims could not be united and partition of India would be the inevitable result. Sardar Patel, surveying the scene from his orthodox political plane, thought in terms of reciprocity — uniform action in Bihar and Bengal and elsewhere. The League would come to its senses only when it realised that violence was a game "at which both parties can play".[25] Pandit Nehru's was an idealistic approach, but it lacked the sanction which Gandhiji's leadership during the non-violent freedom struggle had provided and which alone could make that idealism effective. Sardar Patel, the matter-of-fact realist, was at times very critical of what appeared to him as the disjointed idealism of his colleague. But however much they disagreed with each other neither of them could agree with Gandhiji. They had willy-nilly to obey the dynamics of the machine of which they had become a part—an administration based ultimately upon force — and the inexorable logic of their own policies since coming into power in the Provinces and at the Centre. A widening gulf separated them from their erstwhile oracle. Sardar Patel was the first to recognise it. The recognition came late to Pandit Nehru, and he continued to struggle against it almost to the last.

CHAPTER II

THE WIDENING GULF

1

THERE HAD been a steady drift in the Congress organisation from the ideals which Gandhiji set before it, when he took up its leadership at the beginning of the Satyagraha era, in the early twenties. It had adopted truth and non-violence as a policy, not as a creed. A policy is a matter of practical utility or expediency; it can be given up or changed if it does not answer the purpose or when the end aimed at is attained. A creed is a matter of faith, it cannot be so given up or changed. Gandhiji could not ask those who lacked faith in non-violence to adopt it as their creed. But a policy is as good as a creed while it holds. So, Gandhiji said, it was sufficient for his purpose if Congressmen followed non-violence as a policy. "I could not have done otherwise," he afterwards remarked, "if I was to introduce it (non-violence) into politics. . . . If I had started with men who accepted non-violence as a creed, I might have ended with myself. Imperfect as I am, I started with imperfect men and women and sailed on an uncharted ocean."[1] Believing as Gandhiji did in the identity of means and ends, he argued that they would all at the finish arrive at the same goal if they adopted identical means. Faith would come from experience if non-violence was given a fair and honest trial.

It was no easy job to bring home the meaning and inwardness of the new technique to four hundred millions and to inculcate in them the required discipline. Many even thought, to begin with, that non-violence was to be only a cloak or a mask for violent action which would certainly be launched when they were ready for it. They misunderstood Gandhiji's meaning. Often they faltered. Every time this happened, to clear his own meaning and to bring home to them their mistake, he used the most drastic and unequivocal means at his disposal, i.e. the suspension of the movement and/or vicarious penance by fasting. It took the country ten years of training and practice (1919-30) to learn the meaning and virtues of non-violence and to develop enough strength to hurl defiance successfully on a nation-wide scale against the Government. But non-violence had still with most of them a limited meaning and content. When organised repression

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on the part of the Government came in full blast (1932-34), their restricted non-violence proved a poor match for it.

Why was it, Gandhiji began to ask himself, that even 14 years of trial had failed to yield the anticipated result? He came to the conclusion that though they had adopted the means indicated by him, these had not perhaps the same connotation for them. To yield the result he aimed at, not only had the means to be identical, but they had also to have identical connotation.

The objective of the Congress had been defined as attainment of Swaraj by "peaceful and legitimate means". To Gandhiji the words "peaceful and legitimate" were only a paraphrase of "truthful and non-violent". Did Congressmen take them in that sense or did "peaceful and legitimate" include means other than truthful and non-violent? To set the meaning beyond the shadow of a doubt, he suggested that the words "truthful and non-violent" be substituted for "peaceful and legitimate" in the Congress constitution.

His proposal was thrown out by the All-India Congress Committee that met at Bombay in October, 1934. The Congress was not prepared to repudiate non-violence, nor yet to give up the "ambiguous middle". Similarly, there was a clause in the constitution of the Congress, making "habitual wearing of Khadi" obligatory on Congressmen. It had remained almost a dead letter from the very beginning. But the Congress was not prepared to repudiate Khadi either. There were other points of difference too. Gandhiji came to the conclusion that his personality was acting as an incubus and smothering free self-expression in the Congress and thereby arresting its natural growth, so that from being "the most representative and democratic organisation" it stood in danger of degenerating into an organisation "dominated by one personality" in which "there was no play of reason". They could never realise the full potency of truth or non-violence that way. For that they had to learn "to think and act naturally".

During all these fourteen years Gandhiji had been a member of the Congress. He had never missed a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee and had actively participated in and guided its deliberations. He now decided that he must go out of the Congress to carry on his researches in the field of Satyagraha, unhampered and without hampering others:

> That Congressmen do not still regard non-violence as a creed is no fault of theirs. It is undoubtedly my faulty presentation and, still more, the faulty execution that are responsible for this failure. I have no consciousness of faulty presentation or execution, but it is the only possible inference from the fact that it has not yet become an integral part of the lives of Congressmen. . . .

> In spite of my 27 years of study and practice of the doctrine (of civil resistance), I cannot claim to know all about it. . . . There need be no wonder that, as the only expert, however imperfect among us, I should have come to the conclusion that it should, for some time to come, be limited only to me. . . . It has been increasingly difficult for me to carry the reason of fellow Congressmen with me in all the resolutions recently passed on the subject, whilst they have generously voted for them.
>
> Even the memory of the sense of oppression which they experienced at the time of voting, without an intelligent belief in these resolutions, oppresses me just as much as they were oppressed. They and I must be free from . . . oppression if we are at all to grow in pursuit of what we believe to be the common goal. Hence it is necessary for all concerned to act freely and boldly according to their convictions.[2]

In what respect had the Congress non-violence fallen short of his ideal and objective, he asked himself, and why?

> If we had the full non-violent spirit in us it should have been self-evident and should not have escaped the notice of the Government. . . . Nor were we able to show to the terrorists that we had greater faith in our non-violence than they in their violence. On the contrary, many of us made them feel that we had the same spirit of violence in our breasts that they had. Only, we did not believe in deeds of violence. The terrorists rightly argued that if the spirit of violence was common to both, the policy of doing or not doing violence was a matter of opinion.[3]

The country had made great strides towards non-violence indeed but theirs had not been unadulterated non-violence in thought, word and deed.

> It is now my paramount duty to devise ways and means of showing demonstrably to the Government and the terrorists the efficacy of non-violence as a means of achieving the right thing, including freedom in every sense of the term.[4]
>
> For this experiment . . . I need complete detachment and absolute freedom of action. Satyagraha . . . is to me the universal law of life. Satya, in truth, is my God. I can only search Him through non-violence and no other way. And the freedom of my country, as of the world, is surely included in the search for Truth. I cannot suspend this search for anything in this world or another. I have entered political life in pursuit of this search and if it cannot carry the reason as well as the heart of educated Congressmen, when I say that this search necessarily includes

> complete independence and many other things which may be part of Truth, it is plain I should work single-handed in the implicit faith that what I fail to make clear to my countrymen today shall be clear to them some day of itself; or, if God wills it, *through some apt word He may put in my mouth or some apt work which He may prompt me to do.*[5] (Italics mine).

Accordingly in October, 1934, he resigned from the membership of the Congress and devoted the next three years exclusively to forging non-violent sanctions for the attainment of independence. He buried himself in his Ashram at Sevagram and occupied himself with devising and putting into operation a programme that would help weave the pattern of non-violence into the basic activities that fill the lives of the millions and into their everyday relationships. He called it constructive non-violence. He, however, continued to attend the meetings of the Congress Working Committee when he was invited and to give advice to the Congress leaders when his advice was sought.

In 1937 the question of office acceptance in the Provinces came up before the Congress. Gandhiji advised the Congress in favour of office acceptance as a further stage in the development of the non-violent experiment. His action surprised many at that time. He explained: the acceptance was to be not a venture in the field of power politics but "a serious attempt on the one hand to avoid a bloody revolution and on the other to avoid mass civil disobedience on a scale hitherto not attempted."[6] The goal was to be not merely *to replace* an alien Government, but *an alien method of governance*, to carry out rule "not through the police backed by the military but *through its moral authority based upon the greatest goodwill of the people . . . not in virtue of authority derived from a superior armed power but in virtue of the service of the people whom it seeks to represent in every one of its actions.*"[7] (Italics mine).

This in its turn called for sustained work and discipline, faith in truth and non-violence, and above all in the efficacy of the constructive programme. "*If, however, we are not sure of our own chosen aims,*" he warned, "*we need not wonder, if one fine morning we discover that we had committed a grave blunder in embarking upon office acceptance.*"[8] (Italics mine).

Thereafter every utterance of his was virtually a commentary on the principle of action laid down by him at the time of office acceptance. The communal riots in some cities of the United Provinces and the steps taken by the Congress Ministers to quell them made him ask the question: Is Congress non-violence non-violence of the weak or of the strong and the powerful? "If it is the former, *it will never take us to our goal and, if long practised, may even render us for ever unfit for self-government. . . .* If it (the Congress non-violence)

does not come out of real strength, it would be best and honest for the Congress to make such a declaration and make the necessary changes in its behaviour. . . . *To the extent that the Congress Ministers have been obliged to make use of the police and military, to that extent, in my opinion, we must admit our failure.*"[9] (Italics mine).

"I feel ashamed that our Ministers had to call to their aid the police and the military," he told some co-workers in 1938.[10] The Congress had on its agenda the programme of forming a non-violent volunteers' organisation and to that end had devised a pledge for the volunteers to take and to live up to. But they had not laboured to create such a non-violent army. If, he told them, they had organised one, on an adequate scale, such as the pledge contemplated, they should not have had those riots, and if there were any, they would have either quelled them or immolated themselves in the attempt.

He was seized by an apprehension that, at that rate, they might find themselves overtaken by independence unprepared. Supposing, he asked, the Viceroy were to invite the President of the Congress to meet him and to state the Congress terms, would they (Congressmen) have the strength to say that the Congress was capable of taking charge of the administration, and the British might go? "Do you think we could tell him that we should be able to do without the police and the military, that we should be able to come to terms with the Princes, the zamindars and the Musalmans? I am afraid, we could not honestly say that we should easily be able to come to terms with these. And yet, if we had real non-violence in us, we should be able to say and do these things."[11]

If the Congress non-violence was merely confined to abstention from causing physical hurt to the British officials, he warned, such non-violence would never bring them independence. It was bound to be worsted in the final heat. "Indeed, we shall find it to be worthless . . . long before the final heat is reached."[12] If they felt that they would not be able to displace the British power without a violent struggle, he finally told the Congressmen, the Congress must say so to the nation and prepare accordingly. "We must do what is being done all the world over — *'forbear when we can, hit when we must'. If that is to be our creed or policy, we have lost precious seventeen years.* But it is never too late to learn and mend."[13] (Italics mine).

In spite of their many failures, Congress Ministries had some triumphs of non-violence to their credit. To explore further the possibilities of developing the non-violence of the strong, Gandhiji undertook a tour of the Khudai Khidmatgars in the North-West Frontier Province in the autumn of 1938. The Munich crisis of September 1938, just then threatened to plunge Europe into another war. What would Congress India's reply be to the challenge? The Congress

Working Committee went into a prolonged sitting and at the end, in Gandhiji's words, fifteen members of the Working Committee, at any rate, had the courage to declare their readiness to put their Ahimsa to the test. "The Working Committee almost came to the conclusion that it would deny itself the opportunity of striking a bargain with England, but would make its contribution to world peace . . . through the practice of organised non-violence even unto death."[14] Commented Gandhiji: "This was more than I was prepared for."[15] But even if the Congress had decided otherwise, it would not have made any difference in his position. "Even if I stand alone, there is no participation in war even if the Government should surrender the whole control to the Congress."[16]

The Congress was saved from the test for the time being by the conclusion of the Munich Pact. The next year the World War came and found Congress wanting. Gandhiji's position was again clear. "It fills me with the utmost (faith in) non-violence," he wrote in *Harijan*. "It is impossible for me to enthuse over the deeds of Hitler or of those who fought or failed to fight him. . . . But I have no doubt in my mind that even a patched-up non-violent army would take the wind out of Hitler's sails."[17] The only worthy contribution Congress and India could make to the defence of democracies and defeat of Hitlerism, he declared, was by living up to their faith in non-violence and giving a striking demonstration of its capacity to meet military aggression.

After a deep heart-searching, the members of the Congress Working Committee, however, came to the conclusion that they were not so saturated with the spirit of the non-violence of the brave as to be able to carry conviction to the people. They felt it would be their duty to repel foreign aggression, if need be, by the use of armed strength and join the Allied war effort to fight the threat of Nazi and Japanese aggression, if a satisfactory settlement was effected by Great Britain in respect of the Congress demand. They would be untrue to themselves to act otherwise. They said to Gandhiji: "We feel we could not accept your position with our mind and heart and soul, and we feel we should not entangle you."[18] But neither could Gandhiji be untrue to himself. He said to them: "I must be left free for my self-expression. . . . Of course I shall be available when you want me. But I can no longer identify myself with the direction of your policy and programme. You will, therefore, try your best to do without me and have your meetings in future not at Wardha but elsewhere."[19]

So he asked to be absolved and they absolved him from responsibility for the programme and policy of the Congress. In the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee held at Poona in July, 1940, they offered to cooperate in the war effort of the Allies on certain terms

(Poona offer). These included recognition of India's right to independence. But the British Government again drove the Congress back into Gandhiji's arms by rejecting its demand. In September, 1940, the Poona offer was declared to have "lapsed" and the Congress resolved to launch an individual civil disobedience campaign under Gandhiji's leadership on a "no participation in the war" basis.

In August, 1941, the Viceroy expanded his Executive Council by including several Indians to create a favourable atmosphere for the enlistment of India's cooperation in the Allied war effort. Following upon it the Congress leaders who had been imprisoned during individual civil disobedience were released. In the next meeting of the Congress Working Committee Gandhiji presented an expanded programme of intensive constructive work to deepen and to broaden the foundation of Congress non-violence. In the course of the discussions, however, he discovered that while his opposition to participation in the war was "principally" on the ground of non-violence, most members held that *the opposition need not be on the ground of non-violence.* They believed in the goal of world peace through disarmament but not in unqualified non-violence as a national policy, or as the means to that goal. In the event of foreign aggression, armed resistance, they held, was not ruled out under the Congress creed. Gandhiji, therefore, asked to be relieved of his command and the Working Committee, for the second time, gave him the release.

Under a different political climate this might have easily resulted in a split and disrupted the movement itself but Gandhiji's non-violence made all the difference. Gandhiji could have divided the Congress over the issue. But "I saw it would be a mistake. It would be almost violence. Non-violence does not act in the ordinary way. Sometimes a step back is a prelude to a step forward."[20] The dissentients felt that no opportunity should be given to the Government or the Congress critics to say that the Congress had banged the door to negotiation on the "impossible" or "unpolitical" ground of non-violence. "The resolution," explained Gandhiji to his supporters, "puts the Congress right with the expectant world. . . . All that the Congress has decided to do is that it will allow the world to deal with it in terms that the world can understand. . . . I do not want the Congress to look ridiculous in the eyes of the world."[21]

By accommodating their point of view, Gandhiji put the Congress right with the world and by releasing himself from responsibility for the conduct of the Congress programme, he put the burden of the future upon out-and-out believers in non-violence. If they proved worthy of their salt, he told the latter, it would "in all likelihood in the end . . . make all of one mind."[22] And so it turned out to be. The "Quit India" struggle in August, 1942, found all Congress-

men in the same cry. It saved the Congress from being drawn into direct participation in the war on humiliating terms, ineffectual as such participation would necessarily have been, but the "leonine" action of the authorities left Gandhiji no opportunity to test out and to give a demonstration of the efficacy of his plan of non-violent resistance to foreign aggression, which might possibly have made clear to Congressmen, as he had put it in 1934, "through some apt word that He may put in my mouth or some apt work which He may prompt me to do", what he had failed to make clear to them by word of mouth so far.

And so it came about that when independence ultimately overtook India, it found the Congress, as in 1940, still "vacillating between violence and non-violence"[23] and unprepared to meet the challenge of independence by the power of non-violence alone.

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Khadi, prohibition, cottage industries and removal of untouchability had for many years been an integral part of the Congress programme. With the advent of the National Government at the Centre, and before that in the Provinces, several things that had so far been regarded from a theoretical plane entered the realm of practical possibility. It was with a directive to implement their pledges in regard to these that Gandhiji had sent the Congress members into the Interim Government. Let no one imagine, he warned, "that all is well because we have a Congress Ministry at the Centre."[24]

Before the resumption of power by the Congress in the Provinces as a result of the 1945-46 general elections, quotas of spindles had been allotted by the Central Government to various Provinces under its post-war reconstruction plan. It was stipulated that if a Province failed to utilise its quota, it would be apportioned to other Provinces. Actually, however, there was a scramble. Even Orissa, that land of the skeletons where Gandhiji had found his vision of *Daridra-narayan* — God incarnated as the poor — entered the race. Gandhiji tried to argue with the Congress Ministers that by doubling the number of mills, or by working the existing mills double shift, they might be able to remove cloth shortage but not mass poverty.[25] They could not ride two horses at one time. "*If mills flourish, Khadi must die.*"[26] If Khadi was basically not a sound proposition, or if they had no faith in it, they had better scrap it, but they must not trifle with it. He warned the textile interests: "Let not capitalists and other entrenched personages range themselves against the poor villagers and prevent them from bettering their hard lot by dignified labour."[27]

Khadi and constructive work had been to Gandhiji the symbol of non-violence and a means for the cultivation of non-violent mass discipline. Without constructive activity, in which Khadi or the spinning-wheel held the centre, the phenomenal awakening of the villages of India would not have been possible. Nor could the independence of India have been attained as far as he could see through non-violent effort of the masses otherwise. He had entered politics because without political independence people could not realise their moral freedom and because he knew he could not by keeping out of politics realise the social and economic ideals that he cherished for the India of his dreams. The independence of his conception excluded nobody, not even the "leper and the lunatic". It meant equal opportunity for all to realise the highest realisable in life.

"It is the city man," Gandhiji held, "who is responsible for war all over the world, never the villager."[28] He was out to re-establish justice between the town and the village. As it was, "the balance was heavily tipped in favour of the former to the disadvantage of the latter."[29] But all Congressmen did not share that outlook. Not all Congressmen seemed to be of one mind even as to the content of independence. "I do not know," he remarked, "how many swear by non-violence or the Charkha or, believing in decentralisation, regard the village as the nucleus. I know on the contrary that many would have India become a first-class military power and wish for India to have a strong Centre."[30]

The Congress Ministry in Madras had undertaken to carry out a rather ambitious Khadi scheme. Gandhiji told the Madras Ministers, when they came to seek his approval for it, that their scheme would be "a sham and an eye-wash if at the same time they went on planting fresh textile mills."[31] They would have to lay an embargo on the erection of new textile mills and exclude mill cloth and yarn from the areas covered by their Khadi scheme, if they were at all serious about their business. Further, while any scheme about Khadi without the willing cooperation of those concerned must mean the death of Khadi as a means of obtaining Swaraj, he made it clear that there would have to be some kind of compulsion. "*But it should be the compulsion of circumstances.*"[32] The Ministry agreed to both the conditions and decided not to avail itself of the quota of spindles offered to it. But the Central Government (now the Interim National Government) in which the veteran Congress leader C. Rajagopalachari held the portfolio of industry took up the position that it was not open to any Province to decline to take its quota. Nor was the attitude of the Congress High Command helpful. In March, 1947, the Madras Ministry that had launched the Khadi scheme fell. The succeeding Ministry, while not abandoning the plan, trifled with it. Neither of the two conditions, subject to which Gandhiji had given

his approval to the plan, were implemented and modifications and compromises were introduced in the scheme agreed upon. These affected its essential character and ultimately killed it.

At the Centre, Sardar Patel felt worried over the continued food and cloth shortage in the country. Sharing his anxiety with Gandhiji in one of his letters, he pressed for his return from Noakhali. "To me it is clear as daylight," Gandhiji wrote back, "that we have no need to suffer from food and cloth shortage. That I may not be able to make you see it, is a different matter. In the circumstances, what difference will it make whether I am here or there?"[33]

If he were the Chief Minister of Bihar, Gandhiji remarked in one of his prayer addresses in Patna in April, 1947, and had to select the members of his Government, he would see to it that they stopped the erection of all new mills in Bihar, and those already established sold their manufactured products at a controlled rate outside India. He would prevent "with the consent of the people" the sale of mill cloth in Bihar. "Mill cloth should not sell side by side with Khadi," he said in a meeting with constructive workers at Patna in the last week of April, 1947. "In England you do not get for home consumption cloth manufactured in Lancashire for the overseas market."

A couple of days later in a meeting of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, he further gave expression to his deep sorrow at the widening gulf that seemed to separate his outlook from that of the Congress High Command. The various constructive activities, he remarked, had so far been carried on in a sphere apart from the political. With the assumption of power by the Congress the Ministers could have availed themselves of their experience and enabled them to spread on a country-wide basis what they had so far been doing on an experimental basis. Unfortunately the Government had not done so. "I do not blame the Government. They have inherited machinery which they have to work. If I had been a Minister, perhaps I too would have acted similarly." Constructive workers needed to have infinite patience. Had he not often told them that to mould the politics of the country was also the function of constructive activity? He, however, consoled them with the reflection that "*if in the medley of these conflicts . . . India is to be leader in clean action based on clean thought, God will confound the wisdom of these big men and will provide the villages with the power to express themselves as they should.*"[34] (Italics mine).

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The same attitude of the divided mind characterised the Congress policy in other spheres also. Ever since the Bihar disturbances Gandhiji had been pressing for the appointment of a commission

to inquire into them. Pandit Nehru had written to Shaheed Suhrawardy, the Bengal Chief Minister, that even if the Bengal Government did not agree to have a joint inquiry with identical terms of reference into occurrences in East Bengal and Bihar, the Bihar Ministers "would like to proceed with their own inquiry".[35] But the inquiry showed no sign of materialising. A Muslim Leaguer wrote to Gandhiji that Sardar Patel was at the bottom of the delay. Gandhiji, thereupon, wrote to Sardar Patel:

> You are opposed to the Commission, so are the Governor and the Viceroy. Is that not enough to tie the hands of the Chief Minister? In spite of it, it is my firm opinion that if a Commission is not appointed, it would amount to an admission of the charges in the League's report. I alone know the pressure that is being put upon me (in this regard).[36]

A letter from Pandit Nehru added to his uneasiness:

> I am worried about Bihar. I made it quite clear to some of the Ministers there that they must ask for a Commission of Inquiry or appoint it themselves even if the Bengal Government got out of it. I thought they had agreed, but nothing has been done since. I do not know the reason for this.[37]

"I have a feeling, for which I have no proof whatever," Pandit Nehru continued, "that there is no strong desire for an inquiry. The Bihar Government anyhow move slowly. The Government has done a great deal in giving relief and yet it has not done it in the right way and hence the psychological results achieved have not been great. There is a sense of fear and apprehension among the Muslim population. Badshah Khan, I understand, is not at all happy at what he found there."

On receiving this letter Gandhiji again wrote to the Sardar: "If a Commission is not appointed, it will be a bad job. The Bihar Ministers will stand condemned. What harm can the Commission do if they have a clean bill? Extreme pressure is being put upon me here (in Noakhali) to go to Bihar. But I have faith in the Bihar Ministers and so I am not going there. But if no Commission is appointed, it seems to me I shall have to go there."[38]

The Sardar felt hurt:

> Who told you I have a hand in the non-appointment of a Commission of Inquiry in Bihar? I do hold the opinion that there is no gain but only harm if the Commission is appointed. If in spite of it a Commission is appointed, how can I prevent it? It seems to me strange that such false reports are purveyed to you.
>
> The Bihar Governor is behind the non-appointment of the

> Commission. The Viceroy, too, does not want it. Otherwise who could prevent it? The Calcutta Inquiry Commission (to report on the Great Calcutta Killing of August, 1946) was appointed at the Viceroy's instance. The inquiry is in progress. The report will be available after twelve months. What use will it be after so long? Besides, it would entail sheer waste of money. I fail to understand how I come into this picture.[39]

The repudiation as to the Sardar's direct responsibility was complete and categorical. But there was no mistaking his own attitude. It furnished no answer to Gandhiji's misgivings. Pandit Nehru was troubled but obviously could do nothing. The dichotomy in the mind of the Congress High Command was complete.

In the last week of February, 1947, under Gandhiji's advice, an announcement was at last made by the Bihar Chief Minister in the Provincial Assembly that the Bihar Government had decided to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to report on the communal disturbances in the Province. Gandhiji sent to the Bihar Ministers the following terms of reference for the Commission:

> To examine and report upon the cause of the recent communal disturbances beginning on . . . and the measures taken by the Government of Bihar to deal with them; also to state what steps still remain to be taken by the Government of Bihar in order to restore confidence among the injured Muslims.
>
> 2. The inquiry shall be open to the public and the Judge shall have all the powers required in law to call for records and to summon witnesses.
>
> 3. The Judge is to present his report to the Government on or before . . . .

It was decided to appoint Mr. Justice Reuben, Judge, Patna High Court, as the one-man Commission and a Bill was drafted giving him necessary power for the work. It was also decided that a Muslim civilian should be appointed as the Secretary to the Commission, to inspire confidence amongst the Muslims. The Chief Minister was anxious that the Bill should be passed during the same session of the Legislature. The draft of the Bill was got ready and the Governor, Sir Hugh Dow, was approached for obtaining his formal sanction for the Bill to be introduced in the Provincial Assembly. But he put it off saying he was going to take up the whole matter of inquiry with Delhi. Subsequently, on his return from Delhi in the third week of April, he put forward a note that the drafting of the Bill was somewhat premature; that there had as yet been no decision of Government "even to have an inquiry" ; that the Chief Minister (according to him) had stated in the Assembly "his own reluctant

willingness" to have an inquiry; that indications were that the inquiry in the form proposed would not be acceptable to the Muslim League and they would non-cooperate with it and in that event there would be no advantage but very considerable danger to the public peace in holding it at all. He further stated that there were so many preliminaries to be settled still that there could be no question of introducing the Bill in that session of the Assembly at all. Nor did he consider it to be in any way necessary to do so, since in the event of a final decision in favour of an inquiry, the matter would be "non-contentious" and he would in that event have no objection to issuing an ordinance.

As a result, the Bill could not be introduced in that session of the Assembly. When the matter was again taken up by the Chief Minister in June, the Partition Plan had already been accepted by both the Congress and the Muslim League. The Governor, obviously acting in concert with Delhi, now took up the position that "in the changed constitutional aspect of things" there was no "real demand" for the appointment of the Commission. The Chief Minister was at pains to remind him that it was in the month of February last that the announcement had been made in the Assembly that a Commission would be appointed, that in making that announcement he had the unanimous support of his colleagues in the Cabinet, and that it was now the month of June. It was high time, therefore, the Chief Minister felt, that a formal announcement were made and the necessary preliminary steps taken in that regard, and if the consent of the Chief Justice was needed for the appointment of Mr. Justice Reuben, it should be obtained forthwith. The Chief Justice was subsequently approached and he agreed to depute Mr. Justice Reuben for the purpose.

In the meantime the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, had decided to discontinue the Calcutta Inquiry set up under his predecessor's regime. The Governor now argued that after the complete abandonment of the Calcutta Inquiry, it would be "highly inappropriate" and "even ridiculous" for the Bihar Government to embark on a similar inquiry. It would result in an "immediate recrudescence" of communal troubles in the Province. Finally, he point-blank told the Chief Minister that he was definitely not prepared "in the last few days of my holding office to have any share in the responsibility for such a decision." If the Chief Minister still wished to pursue the matter, he "must" put it up for order after the 14th August to his (the Governor's) successor, after the transfer of power into Indian hands.

On the 15th August, 1947, India was partitioned, either part being formally declared independent. When the matter was again taken up under the instruction of the Chief Minister, the departmental secretary also put forward the plea that in the changed political circumstances, it was no longer necessary "to reopen the bitter past", that "in

the altered political set up" even the Muslim League would not like an inquiry to be held into the communal riots of October-November, 1946. Even apart from this, he submitted, it would be "very odd indeed" if they set up a Commission of Inquiry after the Calcutta Inquiry Commission had been dissolved and everyone had "become eager to forget the unhappy past"! About this time, some prominent Muslim leaders of Bihar, including Dr. Syed Mahmud, the Minister, issued a public statement requesting the Government to drop the idea of appointing a Commission of Inquiry "so as not to rake up the bitter memories", to "enable us to take our proper share in the building up of the Province . . . to ameliorate our social, economic and educational conditions." The agony was cut short when the Council of Ministers in one of their meetings decided to postpone its consideration further "in view of the statement of the Muslim leaders urging the Government not to appoint any Commission of Inquiry. Ultimately, "in view of the demand of the Muslim leaders" (*sic*), on the 30th October, 1947, the Bihar Cabinet decided to drop the idea of appointing the Commission.

Constitutionally the Bihar Government's plea was unassailable. The Governor's obstructing hand was plainly in evidence. But all said and done, had not Gandhiji told the Bihar Ministers that they had to act as if the Governor did not exist? If they and the Congress High Command had been of one mind and taken a firm stand, as Gandhiji had suggested, would the Governor have dared to resist their united will? But the boot was on the other leg. The inquiry never came, the drift in the Congress policy continued, and the political situation moved on to its final climax.

4

It is a curious irony of history that just when a nation or an institution has reached the peak of its power, and the fruition of its labours seems close at hand, it has also developed symptoms of inner decay. But for a considerable time the onlookers see only the glory of its sunset colours, and miss the sad significance of its evanescent hues. It was the same with the Congress on the eve of the transfer of power. Pandit Nehru noticed the rot that had set in beneath the surface. It worried him. In one of his letters to Gandhiji he wrote:

> Conditions all over India to some extent are very unsatisfactory. There is a certain disruptive tendency at work which affects our work in every direction. The whole Congress organisation is suffering from it and we, who are in the Government, have no time at all to give to any work except the immediate

problems which confront us. It is difficult to write much in a letter. But I want you to realise that there is in some ways a progressive deterioration in the situation and I feel very unhappy about it.[40]

And again: "What I am worried most about is the rapidly deteriorating . . . state of the Congress organisation. Those of us who are in the Government have given and can give no time at all to the Congress work. We are losing touch with the people."[41] But there was something even more disturbing: "*When our own approach is not quite clear and there are different viewpoints and pulls, then it becomes even more difficult to deal with the problem.*"[42] (Italics mine).

What, however, with all his perspicacity Pandit Nehru seems to have failed to see was that some of the trends over which he was worried were the inevitable result of the policy pursued by the Congress High Command since the assumption of power by the Congress in the Provinces, and later at the Centre, and the only remedy which could have cured the malaise was the one which probably they were not prepared to adopt. Nor did Gandhiji press it upon them at that stage; it would have been like changing horses in midstream. And, when he did actually present it to them on the last day of his earthly sojourn, they quietly put it on the shelf. (See Chapter XXI).

Gandhiji in his time had been a hard task-master to the Congress. He had for long been its unquestioned "dictator". But his dictatorship was the dictatorship of love, of service; it never irked. When he failed to carry the Congress with him, he went out of it not to undermine it but to serve it from the outside in a more effective way. And so Congress leaders continued to seek his guidance even when they did not see eye to eye with him and he to give it to them in the pursuit of their common goal.

From an annual show, Gandhiji had converted the Congress into an efficient, well-knit, and highly disciplined instrument of action. He had given it an ideology and political philosophy based on truth and non-violence, and a programme of mass action which derived its potency from the strength of the so-called weak. To evoke this power in the millions and to harness it to political action, one had to express in one's own person the common denominator of the best that is in each, the best that millions are capable of, by self-purification, self-discipline, self-denial and self-sacrifice. This called for acceptance and practice by Congressmen of non-violence and its inevitable corollary—self-denial—as a way of life. In the early stages, while the Congress was in the wilderness and there was no other sanction except that of non-violent mass action, with which to give fight to British imperialism, Congressmen willy-nilly fulfilled the conditions that made for that power. Even after the acceptance of

office by the Congress in the Provinces in 1937, this held good in a large measure. Those who went in were affected. The scramble for power began to infiltrate the Congress organisation. Time and again Gandhiji had to pull at the rein.[43] But the top-notch Congress leaders had kept outside. They put a brake upon these tendencies. Everybody knew that a grim struggle with the British power lay ahead in which Gandhiji's non-violent leadership alone could lead the nation to victory. He continued to be recognised as their sole guide in the last resort.

But after the formation of the Interim Government at the Centre in September, 1946, the picture changed. Top-ranking Congressmen were now themselves in the seats of power. They had the sanction of the State machine at their disposal. It was no longer necessary to accept the whole philosophy of non-violence. Though many had carried out its tenets in practice as a measure of discipline over varying periods, very few were really ready to adopt the way of "blood, sweat and tears" indefinitely. It was well-known that some of the tallest in the Congress had actually cried "never again" during their last detention in 1942, when the full brunt of Government repression had descended upon the Congress organisation. Though they would have resented (and in all sincerity, too) any suggestion that they were afraid again to go into the wilderness, their last experience *had* in fact tinged their outlook and political philosophy, whether or no they owned it or even themselves realised it. With the urgency for developing the non-violent sanction gone, or largely reduced, Khadi and all that constitutes the basis of "constructive non-violence" naturally receded into the background and more and more reliance began to be put on what is termed "political action".

The British power hailed this change with a sigh of relief. Gandhiji's Satyagraha had always baffled them. He had confounded them by his utter humility. They had felt puzzled by his naivete when he told them in all sincerity that their rule in India had been an unmixed evil; that the little good that it had done was incidental, the evil inherent and essential; that they lacked the moral fitness to solve the communal problem of which they themselves were conscious and unconscious authors; that even chaos was preferrable to Pax Britannica; that they should quit, leaving India to her fate; and finally that this loving advice was in their own interest, and in tendering it he was acting as their well-wisher and friend. He blunted the edge of their diplomacy by unreservedly accepting their most disingenuous professions at their face value while not concealing from them his fears and suspicions, when they assured him that they were sincerely meant; he deprived them of their trump card when he told them, for heaven's sake, to take away or keep to themselves their army and police, which were certainly not needed for the protection of an India struggling to be independent; that he would

welcome their handing over power to the party in opposition to the Congress if only they would quit. In the last resort, he confounded them by going into the wilderness, by launching non-violent mass action which defied all mathematical calculations and laws of probability. Imprisoned, he made the prison walls glow by his penance and became even more formidable than when he was free. He converted their political victories into moral routs. His non-violence became a disturbing factor. Like snags in a river-bed, it imperceptibly but effectively altered the whole current of events, leaving them perched high and dry on the shoals of their obstinacy and prestige while the whole scene around them changed, creating new compulsions which made them surrender the gains of their political and diplomatic victories to those whom they had seemingly worsted in the fight. No matter whether he lost or won, they were always defeated. They had no weapon in their armoury with which to counter his.

Naturally, they preferred to deal with others, who spoke their language, fought with their weapons, met them on their ground, played the game by their rules. For instance, during the first Simla Conference in 1945, the Commander-in-Chief, at Lord Wavell's instance, sent a member of his staff to acquaint Gandhiji with the facts about the strength and deployment of the British Indian forces. Gandhiji took only polite interest in the exposition. As soon as the officer had left, he put away unread at the bottom of his file the papers which had been handed to him. But Lord Mountbatten found in Congress leaders apt pupils, who hung on his lips, when he discoursed to them on the problem of defence in the event of India being partitioned or otherwise. They were the ones, the word went round, with whom "business could be done". The impossible old man was put on the pedestal, admired for his genius and "unerring hunch", consulted, listened to with respectful attention and — by-passed. But the more they drifted away from him, the more they needed him. For in the last resort he alone could deliver the goods. Wanting nothing for himself, he was anxious only to give and to serve, "Knowing no jealousy, giving himself no airs, never resentful . . . never rude, claiming no rights for himself, loath to brood over an injury . . . slow to expose, eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient."

5

In the course of half-a-century of political struggle, Gandhiji had found that the system is more than the man and in any conflict between the two the former as a rule swallows up the latter. His Old Guard, functioning in a different milieu, surrounded by different faces and working through different instruments had come to think differently, to form new ties and new affiliations which sometimes

carried with them new loyalties. They now sometimes did the very things which they had denounced under the previous regime. Gandhiji noted the change with painful interest. In one of his letters to Pandit Nehru, he wrote:

> I would like you . . . to tell me what you can about the Punjab tragedy. I know nothing about it save what is allowed to appear in the Press which I thoroughly distrust. Nor am I in sympathy with what may be termed by the old expression of "hush hush policy". It is amazing how the country is adopting almost the very measures which it criticised during British administration. Of course, I know the reason behind it. It makes no appeal to me.[44]

They were being slave-driven, too, by their administrative duties. These left them hardly any breathing time. Gandhiji saw their plight and sympathised with them. In a letter written after his arrival in Delhi in the first week of April, 1947, he wrote: "I have been here four days but I have not met the Sardar for more than a few minutes. . . . Sometimes I feel that perhaps I am the only one here in the whole company with spare time on hand."

Often they had to decide and to act on the spur of the moment. That made previous consultation difficult. But more than that, one suspects, it was the feeling that they would have to live with the consequences of their decisions which made it difficult for them always to work in consultation with him. And so they took important decisions without consulting or even informing him. The alternative was again to go into the wilderness and begin the non-violent way afresh — not an easy change-over after getting accustomed to the ways of power. They would have done that, too, if Gandhiji had ordered them but Gandhiji did not want it. It would have lacked inner conviction. They had to grow into it. He dreaded nothing more than being a dead-weight upon them or to stifle their initiative and independence of judgment. Mechanical obedience could not carry them very far in the difficult times that lay ahead and in any case had no place under the living law of non-violence.

This then was the genesis of the Congress Working Committee's passing its resolution for partition of the Punjab into Muslim-majority and Hindu-majority zones, in the first week of March, 1947, without consulting Gandhiji. No communication followed from the Congress High Command after the resolution for nearly a fortnight. On the 20th March, in a letter to Pandit Nehru, Gandhiji wrote:

> I have long intended to write to you asking you about the Working Committee resolution on the possible partition of the Punjab. I would like to know the reason behind it. I have to

speak about it. I have done so in the absence of full facts with the greatest caution. Kripalani said in answer to a question in Madras that it was possible that the principle might be applied to Bengal also. I was asked by a Muslim Leaguer of note . . . if it was applicable to the Muslim-majority Provinces, why it should not be so to Congress-majority Province like Bihar. I think I did not know the reason behind the Working Committee's resolution. Nor had I the opportunity. I could only give my own view which was against any partition based on communal grounds and the two-nation theory. Anything was possible by compulsion. But willing consent required an appeal to reason and heart. Compulsion or show of it had no place in voluntariness.

To Sardar Patel he wrote the same day: "Try to explain to me your Punjab resolution if you can. I cannot understand it."

Sardar Patel replied on the 24th March:

It is difficult to explain to you the resolution about the Punjab. It was adopted after the deepest deliberation. Nothing has been done in a hurry or without full thought. That you had expressed your views against it, we learnt only from the papers. But you are, of course, entitled to say what you feel right.

The situation in the Punjab is far worse than in Bihar. . . . The military has taken over control. As a result, on the surface things seem to have quietened down somewhat. But no-one can say when there may be a burst-up again. If that happens, I am afraid, even Delhi will not remain unaffected. But here of course we shall be able to deal with it.

Pandit Nehru wrote on the following day:

About our proposal to divide Punjab, this flows naturally from our previous decisions. These were negative previously, but now a time for decision has come and merely passing of resolutions giving expression to our views means little. I feel convinced and so did most of the members of the Working Committee that we must press for this immediate division so that reality might be brought into the picture. Indeed this is the only answer to partition as demanded by Jinnah. I found people in the Punjab agreeable to this proposal—except Muslims as a rule. For the present it means an administrative decision without any change in law.

Such a thing would have been inconceivable in olden days. Even when he was ranging over the length and breadth of India, they did not fail to consult him before taking any vital decision.

CHAPTER III

DRAGON'S TEETH

1

IN BENGAL Shaheed Suhrawardy had been sowing the proverbial dragon's teeth. It was not without misgivings that Gandhiji left Noakhali for Bihar in the first week of March, 1947. He would have gone on his mission with greater confidence if he felt that he was leaving a peaceful Noakhali behind. But that was not to be.

A critical situation had developed towards the close of Gandhiji's stay in Noakhali. The measures for the relief and rehabilitation of the riot victims adopted by the Bengal Government were tardy, half-hearted and ill-conceived, and were executed in a halting, niggardly spirit.[1] Even Thakkar Bapa's patience gave way. "This is the cruelest joke I can . . . imagine played upon the minority community," he reported to Gandhiji on the 3rd December, 1946. "The Government . . . wants to do as little as it can. All decency is thrown to the winds. I am inclined to advise the people with my feeble voice that they should . . . spurn the Government offer and not . . . accept it at all."

The previous Rehabilitation Commissioner of Chittagong Division — A. S. Larkin — had issued orders that the distribution of doles in the refugee camps should continue till the riot-affected people were "finally rehabilitated". But his successor, a Muslim officer, reversed that policy, and although riot-affected people in Ramganj area had not yet been supplied with house-building materials, nor the artisans with tools nor agriculturists with cattle and agricultural equipment, the distribution of "dry" doles in the camps was suddenly stopped from the 1st February, 1947, and in its place "test relief works" were opened for *both the communities.*

This was strange. But it led to stranger results. Test relief operations are generally undertaken under the Indian Famine Code, when there is a universal scarcity. Relief in the present case was provided on the basis of "earth work". Most of the victims of the riots, however, were unaccustomed to that kind of labour. As a result, relief was practically stopped for the victims and opened for their oppressors. In Chandpur sub-division, an officer directed that relief should be extended to the families of *those who were*

detained in the police lock-up awaiting their trial or who had "absconded in connection with the recent riot." It provided an indication as to where the sympathies of the authorities lay. This added to the demoralisation of the riot-affected community. The strange procedure, moreover, applied to an area where the proportion of the riot-affected community to the general population was as two to nine, reduced Government relief almost to a farce, as there were at that time supplies of food-stuffs and clothing not enough to go round in the affected area.

By the 4th March, all big relief camps were closed down in pursuance of this policy. Test relief works employed about thirty thousand people. They also were scheduled to be closed by the middle of March. About sixty thousand refugees from various camps in Tipperah, Noakhali and Calcutta were repatriated to their respective villages. They were provided with a fortnight's free rations. The previous Rehabilitation Commissioner had directed that refugees who returned to their villages "should not be left at the mercy of local food committees" in respect of the supply of dry doles after their rations were exhausted. But the District Controller of Noakhali issued a notice that distribution under the modified rationing system that had been introduced under the test relief scheme should be through "approved" retailers. The vast majority of them were local Muslims and were known to be inimically disposed towards the Hindus. The latter were thus exposed to the very danger from which the Rehabilitation Commissioner had tried to save them.

Muslim Magistrates freely granted bail to the Muslims arrested on charges of loot and murder, but issued non-bailable warrants in the case of Hindus against whom false cross-cases were instituted by the Muslims. Serious cases involving arson and murder were not properly investigated. Notorious culprits were not apprehended, even when they went about terrorising the members of the riot-affected community. Offenders who stood charged with heinous crimes in connection with the disturbances were not brought to book. An organised movement was launched in different areas by the Muslims to boycott agriculture of the Hindus with the avowed object of compelling them to give their signatures to representations for the release of the ringleaders.

Before leaving Noakhali for Bihar, Gandhiji addressed a letter to the Bengal Chief Minister, in the course of which he wrote:

> There was consternation among the Hindus yesterday when I announced my intention of immediately proceeding to Bihar. They said they were afraid of being molested as in October. I hope that the fear will prove groundless and that you will do all you can to allay the fear.
>
> It is said that all aid in the shape of rations will be stopped

> from the 15th instant. If the information turns out to be true, there would be widespread, avoidable distress. The machinery provided for relief is very slow.
>
> Sufficient material for building is not there. Weavers have got no yarn for weaving. Fishermen have got none for making nets. Carpenters have got no tools. Agriculturists have no bullocks. There are no seeds for sowing. Thakkar Bapa mentioned the difficulty of merchants in Haimchar for a loan in order to enable them to start business. . . . I hope there will be no delay in granting the loan. I would strongly urge that interest should not be asked in such cases.
>
> There is a strong belief that there is boycott by the Muslims of Hindus so far as labour for them is concerned. Of course I have said that no Government can compel any community to labour for another. Critics have no difficulty in agreeing to my proposition against compulsion. They however suggest that boycott is approved, even encouraged, by your Government. I hope that my information is wholly wrong.[2]

But distressing reports continued to follow him even in Bihar. The 22nd March scheduled by the Muslim League to be observed as Pakistan Day caused panic among the Hindus of Noakhali. Gandhiji appealed to the Muslim League and the Bengal Government to abandon the observance of the day. He sent a telegram to Shaheed Suhrawardy: "I am plunged into the work here (in Bihar). Therefore do not want to rush to Noakhali. . . . Expect you to act nobly and correctly."[3] Shaheed Suhrawardy issued orders prohibiting the holding of "open air meetings, demonstrations and processions" in areas in which prohibitory orders were already in force, and sent one of his colleagues to Noakhali to restore confidence.[4] Obviously there was no objection to holding meetings in private. That made things worse. Gandhiji wrote to Shaheed:

> I have seen your Press note. . . . I must confess that it does not give me much satisfaction. May we hold Pakistan Day celebration meetings in parts of Bengal where Section 144, Criminal Pocedure Code is not in action or where there is no other prohibitory order? And if meetings can be held indoors are they not likely to be far more dangerous than public meetings?[5]

The Minister for Civil Supplies who was sent by the Bengal Chief Minister to Noakhali "to restore confidence", on reaching there, proceeded himself to violate the prohibitory order issued by his Government by addressing a public meeting on Pakistan Day. His example was copied by others. Here are some points from a speech delivered at one of the meetings: (1) Hindus had fled their

homes not because there was repression but to put the Muslims in the wrong; (2) Reports of theft from Hindu houses were mostly false; (3) Hindus were receiving relief grants by making false statements; and (4) Muslims had been exploited, oppressed and impoverished by the Hindus; for this Hindus had now to suffer at the hands of the awakened Muslims — there was no help.

Cases of arson and loot continued to be on the increase. On receipt of these reports Gandhiji wired to Satish Chandra Das Gupta: "All your precise but painful wires; also from Haran Babu. Case seems to be for exodus or perishing in flames of fanaticism. Hope you will not advise my coming to advise on choice. Hold counsel with workers and act promptly."[6] As there seemed to be no prospect of effective, prompt action by the Bengal Government, Gandhiji released to the Press the telegrams exchanged between himself and Satish Das Gupta and his telegram to Shaheed Suhrawardy. Suhrawardy reacted by banning their publication in the Bengal Press and justified his action on the ground that their publication would have brought about "another conflagration".[7] The conditions in Noakhali were normal so far as he was aware!

Gandhiji to Shaheed Suhrawardy (Patna) 18th April, 1947

> I cannot endorse your insinuations. I have never subscribed to "hush hush" policy. Publication of false news I hold to be a crime against humanity. If true news gives rise to conflagration, there is something wrong with society and its leaders.
>
> I began publishing the wires received from Noakhali when I despaired of getting a hearing from you and when being outside Noakhali, I felt helpless. . . . Probably my presence in Noakhali would have made no difference in the situation. Only I would have derived the satisfaction from the fact that I was in Noakhali sharing the trials of its people and my co-workers.
>
> It surprises me that you should discount the statement of facts supplied by Shri Satish Chandra Das Gupta. The culprits may never be traced but the facts of arson and loot could not be disputed nor would the community from which the culprits are derived be disputed. *The rulers whether democrats or autocrats — whether foreign or indigenous — forfeit the right to rule when they fail to deal properly with crimes* even when the culprits are able to defy detection. (Italics mine).

Shaheed Suhrawardy wrote back in reply that things were "not so bad as made out by Mr. Satish Chandra Das Gupta or as apprehended by you (Gandhiji)," and that the situation would improve as a result of the steps he was taking. "The officers have

been warned to be more wary and not to show any complacency. From that point of view your telegrams (published in the Press) may have done some good but it was my intention to send for the officers even without the publication of those telegrams."[8] The rest of his letter was full of clever debating points:

> I do not . . . subscribe to a hush hush policy. . . . It is difficult to know what news is false and what true until there has been investigation and if you hold . . . that the publication of false news is a crime against humanity, then one has to be very careful before unconfirmed news are propagated as true news.
>
> You have said, "If true news gives rise to conflagration, there is something wrong with society and its leaders." . . . Are you suggesting by any means that there is nothing wrong with society and its leaders? . . . You have seen both Noakhali and Bihar. . . . Until the feeling of retaliation and revenge and hatred is eradicated from the heart of Hindu and Muslim *one has to be cautious in the purveying of news even if true*. . . . These are practical matters that we have to contend with, and we cannot afford to theorise.

The Chief Minister could not see why Gandhiji should have "despaired" of getting a hearing from him. He (Suhrawardy) could not have done anything without reference to local officers. He had requested the Muslim members of the Legislative Assembly to investigate some of the incidents. "They have investigated some. . . . They feel that many of these cases of arson which are very petty in nature are not genuine. They are either due to the machinations of a section of Hindu volunteers who want to keep up the tension as it helps them to malign the Government of Bengal and enforces their argument for the partition of Bengal, or they are due to the cupidity of some people who think that by setting fire to unimportant structures they will be able to get some compensation which will more than repay them for the destruction." He himself, he added, would not like to be dogmatic about any opinion. "Do you not think that the publication of daily reports by Mr. Satish Chandra Das Gupta (in *Dinalipi*, the cyclostyled daily bulletin issued by the Gandhi Camp in Noakhali) . . . which he has not inquired into . . . keeps up fear and panic instead of allaying it?" The letter proceeded:

> Your ultimate remark that the rulers whether democrats or autocrats . . . forfeit the right to rule when they fail to deal properly with crimes even when the culprits are able to defy detection . . . will not be accepted even by your most ardent followers . . . because crimes do exist in all parts of the world and somebody has still got to rule even though the crimes are

> undetected and cannot be dealt with properly. What has taken place in Noakhali is not just a crime of the Province. It is a crime for which the political tension throughout India . . . is responsible. The immediate cause was however the carnage of Calcutta. . . .

The letter ended with the following homily: "I feel that you do not realise that India has got to go a long way towards purging of the heart before it will become human again and it is on our contributions towards the eradication of suspicion, distrust and hostility that we shall be judged by humanity."

As verbal pyrotechnics this was superb. Only, as the report of his own Divisional Commissioner showed, the statement bore no relation to reality. In a matter which called for a serious, practical approach, Suhrawardy was content to "theorise" which he had said in his letter to Gandhiji "we cannot afford".

To Satish Chandra Das Gupta the Chief Minister at the same time wrote: "I am most anxious to establish friendship between the two communities. . . . Your paper known as the *Dinalipi* which circulates any report brought to you has, in my opinion, tended to increase panic and terror. . . . I am sorry that you still do not give the local Muslims any credit for their attempts to establish confidence. . . . The Muslim leaders maintain that the volunteer organisations are keeping the Hindus and the Muslims apart."[9] And again: "I hope you will . . . speak to the Muslims not as potential enemies but friends."[10] This suggestion he was making, he went on to say, because he greatly appreciated the work which the Gandhi Camp in Noakhali was doing!

To this Satish Chandra Das Gupta sent the following reply with Gandhiji's approval:

Satish Das Gupta to the Chief Minister 10th May, 1947

> Nothing will please me better than to be able to say that there is such general help from the local Muslims as to dispel all fear and suspicion from the Hindu mind. I am sorry to say such is not as yet the case. . . .
>
> As for *Dinalipi*, it is a circular letter designed to be circulated only among workers and friends who are kept informed of corporate activity. It rigorously eschews all but authentic reports. None of your officials has complained of any exaggeration.
>
> Regarding complaints against volunteers, I would suggest that every instance of misbehaviour should be exposed and dealt with under the law. . . . I can give assurance that any specific complaint shall be dealt with immediately. We are here to serve, not to hinder the cause of peace.

> You have advised me to speak to the Muslims not as "potential enemies" but as friends. The Muslims to me are a part of ourselves. I do not and cannot look upon them as "potential enemies".

2

How close to peril the situation in Noakhali had been brought by the Bengal Government's policy of stout denials and easy complacency was clear from a report marked "Top Secret" which the Commissioner of Chittagong Division, H. T. Barret, I. C. S., submitted to the Bengal Government on the situation in Noakhali, in the second week of May, 1947, after making an inquiry on the spot:

> To the casual observer, the district seems normal enough. Most of the fields are green with *aus* paddy and jute, and the remainder are being ploughed. The bazars and *hats* (village markets) are functioning normally and both Hindus and Muslims may be seen moving about freely and without any apparent apprehension. Under the surface, however, there is definitely tension and among Hindus, a sense of insecurity. . . . The Hindus, especially the *bhadralog* class (middle class) had a bad shaking during the October disturbances and have not yet recovered their morale . . . and though many of them are kept in a state of fear by open threats and petty persecution and molestation at the hands of the Muslims, they will not report these cases to the Thanas or the local officers for fear that if it became known that they had done so, worse things would befall them. Sometimes, however, they do report them to the local political relief workers . . . but if official inquiries are then made, they will more often than not deny that the incidents they reported ever occurred or that they brought them to notice. In many cases of this kind, it is well known that the incidents actually took place and there are Muslims who know of them and will admit it. All that the Hindus succeed in doing by adopting this attitude of secret report and subsequent denial of the facts is to impeach their own credit. But such is the state of their demoralisation. . . .

One thing, according to the report, which more than any other had served to increase "the demoralisation of the Hindus and the turbulence and aggressiveness of the Muslims" was the way in which the authorities had handled the cases arising out of the October disturbances. The analysis of figures for such cases showed that by

15th April, 1947, out of 1,529 cases, no less than 862 had resulted in final report and only 164 in charge-sheets. No less than 566 accused were still at large "including several of the most dangerous ringleaders", and out of 677 arrested accused only 50 remained in custody.

> In the nature of things, a large number of cases must end in final reports and the high proportion of such cases would not have caused apprehension to the Hindus or anxiety to the civil administration, had all the ringleaders and those known to have committed murder been arrested, and had it been believed that the case against these persons would be rigorously prosecuted. This is not the case, and the Hindus now feel that the police are not serious in their attempts to track down the real culprits and bring them to book, while the Muslims, who were told that they would be immune from prosecution, are confident that retribution will not overtake them. . . .

The Muslims of the district, according to the Commissioner, could be divided into three distinct categories. The number of those coming under the first category was small. They were friendly towards the Hindus. The majority fell in the second category. This class, while strongly pro-Muslim League and anxious to oust the Hindus from the position they held in the district, did not favour violence as a means to attain that end. It saw no objection, however, to the petty persecution of the Hindus,

> and if the persecution is somewhat extreme, it is ready to turn a blind eye to the fact, when not to do so might lead to unpleasantness or even unpopularity. This section will give lip-service to communal harmony and peace and will often be outwardly friendly to Hindus. It will not, however, take any part in preventing disturbances or protecting the Hindus, and may, even under the influence of rumour and the excitement of the hour, take part in disturbances and encourage others to do so. Many members of Union Boards belong to this class. The third category is the most dangerous. To this class belong those Muslims who, for reasons of religious zeal, economic jealousy or personal enmity, hate the Hindu and want to see him wiped out. This class would not ordinarily be powerful but circumstances have combined to make it so today and it has the advantage of having attracted to its side the *goonda* element of the district, which sees in disturbances the prospect of easy acquisition of wealth and power. Many persons who fall in this category are able, if violent speakers and can work up a mob into a state of frenzied anger.

Both local Muslims and the police had been at pains to advance the plea that arson had "always" been a "common offence" in the district. The Commissioner's comment on this was that it had "never been as widespread as it is today". It had further been argued that in the increase of crime, which had of late taken place, the Muslims had been sufferers equally with the Hindus, and that the increase had no communal colour. In rebuttal, the Commissioner observed:

> This is palpably untrue. Although the Hindus are outnumbered in the district by $4\frac{1}{2}:1$, the crimes took place for the most part in Hindu houses. In the case of arson, the number of houses affected in the last eight weeks alone was 3 Hindus to 1 Muslim. In other words, allowing for the disproportion in population, the true ratio of Hindu and Muslim victims was $13\frac{1}{2}:1$. Similarly in the case of dacoity, the ratio of houses affected works out to 9 Hindus to 1 Muslim. It is true, of course, that many of the Hindus are better off than the Muslims and economically it is therefore often more profitable to rob a Hindu house than a Muslim one, but there is little room for doubt that most of the arson committed was for communal reason, and that in many of the other cases, Hindu houses were selected in preference to Muslim ones because the owners were Hindus and because for that reason, the offence would be regarded as venial. The brunt of the crime wave has fallen on them because they are Hindus and if further argument is needed to support their contention it will be found in the fact that during the last eight weeks there have been no less than five cases involving desecration of Hindu holy places.

Shaheed Suhrawardy, in the course of his acrimonious correspondence with Gandhiji in Noakhali, had complained that no information was being lodged by the local Hindus against the "real culprits" and the complaints that were actually being lodged were *mala fide*. "There is reason to believe," reported Barrett, "that complainants in cases arising out of the disturbances are being threatened by Muslims and compelled to agree to their cases being compromised."

> What is happening is that a section of Muslims is taking advantage of the demoralised condition of the Hindus to insult, threaten and cow them down into a state of resigned submission, after which they fatten on their property and treat them as an inferior race. It is quite usual for Hindus while moving about to be addressed as *malaun* (accursed) or *kafir* (infidel). Sometimes they are searched by parties of Muslims and deprived of

> anything the latter fancy. Cases have occurred of Hindus returning to their houses with their daily bazar having their purchases snatched away; the removal of coconuts and betelnuts from the gardens of Hindu homesteads is a common occurrence; corrugated iron sheets and timber are often taken from Hindu houses with the frightened consent of the inmates; cattle belonging to Hindu households have developed a habit of freeing themselves from their tethers and disappearing; the paddy plants of Hindus have been uprooted and thrown away. If an aggrieved Hindu reports these occurrences to the Thana his sufferings are increased, and there have been cases in which such reports had led to the burning of the victims' huts; efforts are being made to have Hindu-owned cinema houses closed, and although the vast majority of weavers in the district are Hindus (naths) the demands are being made that 50% of the loom licences should go to Muslims. There is a move to rid the bazars of Hindu merchants. . . . Long established Hindu shopkeepers are being ousted from the markets to make way for Muslims. Hindus who have rebuilt their houses (including even women) have been told that they will not be allowed to live in them and that it will be better for them to leave the district. . . . Much of this persecution is comparatively petty, but it is lawlessness none the less and it shows that the virus which was injected into the district before the October disturbances has not yet been eradicated. . . .

The Chief Minister of Bengal and his colleagues had blamed "outside agencies" for holding up rehabilitation and preventing the re-establishment of "normal relations" between Hindus and Muslims. On that score they had demanded the removal of all outside workers from Noakhali. Barrett showed that on the contrary, it was the inadequacy of Bengal Government's rehabilitation policy that was really to blame:

> Owing presumably to the shortness of building materials, less than 50% of those who have received house-building grants have been provided with building materials by Government. Such materials can only be obtained from the local market at fantastic prices, and there is no doubt that if adequate supplies were made available by Government the process of rehabilitation would be accelerated. Stories have been put about that Hindu families which have been provided with house-building materials by Government have sold the materials in the black market. Such cases may have occurred, and that risk must be taken. In point of fact, I am assured that the number of such

> cases is negligible. Similarly, an allegation that is frequently made by Muslims in Noakhali, is that Hindus have been burning their own houses in order to implicate Muslims and to secure house-building grants. Such allegations must be heavily discounted. The morale of the Hindus is too low for them to dare risk the consequence of such an action, and apart from the inconvenience caused by the burning, it is most unlikely that the grants made would be sufficient to cover the extent of the damage.

Two notorious absconders, who had taken a leading part in the disturbances, had secretly returned to the affected area. They held nightly meetings and went about telling the people that "they made a mistake in the last disturbances by not killing all the Hindus and that they would not make the same mistake next time." And yet they were not arrested in spite of numerous representations that were made to the authorities:

> The fact that they are still at large and are able to make these statements is demoralising the Hindus in one way and the Muslims in another, and though the bulk of the Muslim population, either through fear or sympathy, will not give any information about their movements, there is no doubt that both these men could have been arrested weeks ago. The lack of confidence engendered by these aspects of the situation has been increased by laxity on the part of the magistracy in releasing persons on bail owing to political pressure, and the failure of the police to keep a tag on those released on bail and press for the cancellation of the bail bonds of those believed to be interfering with witnesses. Only three bail bonds have been cancelled up to the end of 30th April. To anyone in touch with the situation in the district such a figure is preposterous. If any degree of confidence is to be restored, it is of paramount importance that these matters should be set right.

The worst of it was that the police seemed to be conniving at what was happening in the interior of the district: "The District Intelligence Branch is either paralysed or intentionally dormant, and the lack of information is so remarkable that one cannot but suspect that when information does come within the grasp of the police, they shut their eyes to it. This virtual suppression of information is embarrassing to the District Magistrate. . . . It was complacency of this kind which led to the holocaust in October last, and which may yet result in a repetition of that disaster."

Even after this, the local police officials maintained that the conditions in Noakhali were "nothing but normal" and blamed it all

on the presence of Gandhiji's workers in the district.[11] The effect of it all was to deepen the feeling among a section of the Hindus that there could be no safety or security for them under the Muslim League rule and their only salvation lay in demanding the constitution of the Hindu majority areas of Bengal into a separate State within the Indian Union. Confronted with this demand, Shaheed Suhrawardy made a belated attempt to stem the tide by tightening up security measures in Noakhali, cancelling of the bails of such ruffians as, since their release, were threatening and intimidating members of the minority community, and ordering the trial of those who stood accused of serious crimes during the riots. But it was too late, the fat was already in the fire, and the local Muslims, the Muslim League organisation in Noakhali and the district administration at the local level, all combined to render the eleventh hour effort—half-hearted again—nugatory, leaving the Bengal Premier to reap what he had sown.

3

The activity of Gandhiji's companions in Noakhali after his departure for Bihar was divided into two phases. Our main endeavour in the first was to build up the morale of the terror-stricken people by communicating to them Gandhiji's gospel of faith, fearlessness and non-violence by personal contact. In the second this was carried further by introducing constructive activity among them to provide a basis for non-violent organisation. The results were most encouraging.

"Do you know, Quasim Ali is reported secretly to have returned to these parts recently?" the Special Relief Commissioner asked me one day with some concern soon after Gandhiji's departure from Noakhali. "He has organised a private army of nearly 250 men. His men hold nightly meetings, at which they post armed guards. They are provided with electric torches, green shirts, khaki pants and servicemen's turbans." In a letter to me he wrote: "I am told by the local people that you are running great personal risk by spending nights at Gopairbag alone."[12] A few days later, he himself accidently ran into a group of them and came out of it only by the skin of his teeth. At the mention of Quasim Ali's name men turned pale with fear. Mothers used his name as a bogy to frighten their children. A warrant of arrest had been issued against him after the terrible Gopairbag massacre. (See Vol. I, page 374). Since then he had been absconding.

Three days after my meeting with the Relief Commissioner, a party of masked men entered two houses in a neighbouring village and extorted from them in the name of Quasim Ali a sum of Rs.250 and Rs.125 respectively at the point of the dagger. This was followed by a similar incident in another village close by.

I visited the victims of extortion at the first place on the morning after the happening with a batch of boys and girls whom we had been giving training in fearlessness. One of the victims was in a state of nervous collapse. He was palsied by fear and unable even to talk coherently. I spoke to the Muslims of the locality more in sorrow than in anger. It was a matter of shame for the whole village, I said, that a party of outsiders had dared to come and molest anybody living in their midst like that but an even worse stigma to my mind was the cowardice betrayed by the victims. Even if one person in the village exhibited such cowardice, the shame of it rested on them all.

My remarks touched them to the quick. Their local patriotism was stirred. Some of them expressed their indignation at the crime and even talked of concerting measures "to teach these fellows a lesson". I then called one after another the boys and girls who had come with me and asked them within the hearing of the whole company how they would act if they were in the place of the victims.

"I would have shouted for help," answered one girl.

"But the ruffian would have instantly cut your throat," I said to her.

"Have you not told us we must all die one day, one cannot die twice?" she unhesitatingly answered.

"I would not shout for help," another girl interrupted. "I would tell the ruffian: You can cut my throat and carry away whatever you like but you too will die one day and then you will have to leave it all behind and be left with only the load of sin on your head to carry."

A little boy of 12 answered: "So and so in our village offered money to the rioters. Yet they killed him. I won't offer them money. Let them kill me."

Their natural, spontaneous and spirited replies surprised even me. The women belonging to the families of the victims felt braced up and began to exhort their men to pluck up courage.

The Muslims were intently watching all this. One of them came up to me and said: "I confess I was suspicious as to your aims when you started those activities in your camp. I did not understand. I now see what you were after. I appreciate it. We must all cooperate in eradicating cowardice from our village. What has happened is an insult to the whole village. The honour of the whole village is compromised when the honour of any one in it is touched."

* * *

The boycott by the Muslim tillers of the Hindus' cultivation referred to in the earlier volume (See Vol. I, page 439) had by this time spread into our part of the district. Hindu cultivators had no ploughcattle. Even their agricultural implements had been taken away

during the disturbances. The agricultural labour was predominantly Muslim. The influence of the Fuehrer and his lieutenants, though they were in prison awaiting trial, was strong particularly in this area. Their agents went round and told the Hindus that so long as their leaders were locked up, no Muslim would work for them. Hindus must withdraw complaints against the Muslim accused and sign a petition for their release.

With dwindling supplies the prices of food-stuffs were soaring. To cope with the crisis, the Government had been obliged to open "control price" shops for the distribution of rations for relief. I met the Muslims in the local mosque after their Friday prayers and told them that whatever else their boycott might or might not achieve, it would not help fill their empty rice-pots. If the boycott succeeded, their success would recoil upon them but we were determined to save them against themselves. We would do cultivation by spades and see to it that more land was brought under cultivation by hand-labour this time than ever before.

The next day we started work, all the men, women and even children in our camp, except the sick or the decrepit, joining. Those who could not dig helped by collecting edible roots and rhizomes that the digging uncovered. Cooking was suspended in some of the families for the day. In less than a week, all the space available for cultivation was dug up. Our example was copied by the people in the village next to ours. Soon there was a request from five other villages to launch the movement there also. Over five hundred men, women and children from all the seven villages took part in the inaugural function. It was a never-to-be-forgotten sight. Walking in rows of two they converged from different directions at the place of the meeting singing Ramadhun. On the way a dozen Muslim girls joined them and swelled the chorus. While the Muslims of the locality including the Muslim girls watched, the whole company set to work with the digging implements which they had brought with them. Some of the women who took part in the operation belonged to the families of the land-owners. Their digging the fields of their tenants was a great inspiration to the cultivators.

Two diggings in all the villages were thus performed by spades. Before the time for the third digging came, the Muslims decided to lift the boycott. Some of them even began complaining that the Hindus were boycotting Muslim labour! Later we were able to obtain four pairs of bullocks and 51 spades from relief organisations as a donation. But our most valuable asset was the lesson of self-help and mutual aid which the people had learnt and the bond which had grown up among them.

* * *

One day in the third week of March, 1947, I returned home very late. Feeling dead tired after the strenuous day's programme, I laid myself down to rest on a palm-leaf mat in the open yard of our camp and was soon fast asleep. Hardly an hour later a messenger from the neighbouring village of Gopairbag came looking very white in the face. He said that Quasim's men had threatened to set fire to a *mali*'s house "within an hour" as a punishment for cooperating with the Gandhi Camp. The members of the threatened family were feeling very nervous. Could I go there? I started with one co-worker. When we reached there, we found men, women and children huddled in the middle of the courtyard sobbing as if their hearts would break. I told the members of the threatened family that I would be with them through the night. If anything untoward happened, we would face it together. That cheered them somewhat. Nothing, however, happened that night except that before dawn came to our rescue we were all but eaten up by swarms of dive-bombing mosquitos.

Next day the threat was repeated. I again proceeded there, accompanied this time by one woman and two little girls of ten or twelve from our camp. On the way we met a party of Muslims coming from the opposite direction. At first I walked past them without taking any notice but, impelled by an undefined instinct, I turned back, overtook them and asked them whence were they coming.

"From Gopairbag."

"Whither bound?"

"To our home."

"Where is it?"

No answer was given. I became suspicious, whipped out my flashlight and turned it full upon the face of the person I was talking to and then from one to the other, and lo and behold! they were all in green shirts, khaki pants and servicemen's turbans just as the Special Relief Commissioner had told me. As they still refused to answer my question, I told them that I had carefully studied their faces and if anything untoward happened in that area that night they would have to answer for it.

Again nothing happened at the *mali*'s house. In the morning I learnt, however, that the Muslims of the locality were in great excitement as Quasim's men had spread a rumour that I had insulted some Muslim women I was supposed to have met on the road on the previous night. I was accused of removing their veils and flashing an electric torch in their faces. That gave a very clear clue to the identity of the group I had encountered that night.

Hitherto all my attempts to contact Quasim had met with little success. His men had been instructed to say that he had not

been seen in that neighbourhood since the disturbance. This was of course not true. I decided to hold a meeting of the people of the locality. This I knew would be attended by his men. At the meeting, after describing how I had tried in vain to contact him, I observed that if things continued like that, the inevitable result would be that the bails of such Muslims as were implicated in the disturbances and had since been let out would be cancelled or not renewed on expiry and the authorities would be forced to tighten up their security measures. At the same time I contacted another person whom I knew to be a close collaborator of Quasim Ali's but who somehow professed to be very friendly towards me. He gave me a tip. "Go to Quasim's house between 2 and 3 p.m. You will find there Quasim's brother, who is the Union Board president. Don't tell him I sent you. Tell him what you said at the meeting the other day and if Quasim is there you will probably be able to meet him."

I did as I was directed. Of course, I was told, Quasim was not there. "All right, then tell him," I said to his brother, "that I came as a friend, not as an enemy. Things are being done in his name which can only do him harm. I am sorry, I shall not be able to say on his authority, as I had hoped to after meeting him, that those who were indulging in unlawful activities in his name were no friends of his. Please also convey to him on my behalf the further assurance, if any assurance is necessary," I concluded, "that as a reformer, I can never act as an informer. I would never betray him to the police. Personally, I am pledged not to invoke police aid even for self-protection. I am interested in conversion, not in the arrest or punishment of anybody." I then took leave saying that I was going to my colleague Viswaranjan's camp which was close by.

Hardly had I been ten minutes at Viswaranjan's camp, when a messenger came from Quasim's residence to say that he had "just arrived" and would like to see us. This was precisely what I had expected.

Minutes later we were talking to a fair complexioned, tall, young man with a well trimmed beard. One was struck by his cultured, refined expression and engaging manner till a sudden quirk betrayed something queer behind that well-groomed exterior. According to the Noakhali code of hospitality, he pressed upon us refreshing juice of green coconuts. As his men opened with their *daos* green coconuts, I wondered within myself how many innocent human beings had been chopped up with those very *daos* during the disturbances. I could not take my eyes off those choppers. Quasim noticed this. Then, as if guessing what was in my mind, he said: "I am the author of all the mischief—if you choose to put it that way—in these parts." "So the people say," I remarked. Quasim proceeded: "I disposed of the young man who disappeared while

returning from Mr. Gandhi's prayer meeting at Dattapara. (See Vol. I, page 376). We found fire-arms on his person. I can even produce the revolver. . . ."

"With which you despatched him?" I asked.

He smiled, showing a row of very white teeth.

He said he felt "honoured" by the visit I had paid him. He condemned acts of forced conversion, dishonouring of women and killing of children; he was for "clean killing". He admitted that he was evading arrest. If I could convince him that what he had done was "wrong" he would make an open confession and surrender to the police. "We have only meted out to the Hindus their deserts. They are responsible for all the sufferings of the Muslims. They have oppressed them. Of course we appealed to communal passions during the disturbances. But do you think we could have succeeded if the Hindus had not been the 'haves' and the Muslims the 'have-nots'? Conversions were a mistake. We should have killed them all. We shall not repeat that mistake next time." He then broke out into an imprecation against the Sikhs. "Sikhs must be exterminated. We shall chew them up." This was significant in view of what actually happened afterwards in the Punjab and the Frontier Province.

I listened in silence to this berserk outburst. Quasim proceeded: "I am a maniac so far as Hindus are concerned."

"You have correctly characterised yourself."

"I cannot help hitting a Hindu when I meet one," he went on.

I looked him straight in the eyes with an amused smile. He recollected himself. "No, no. I did not mean that. You are different." And then by another sudden quirk, "Do you know the complaint against you?"

"That I unveiled a Muslim woman and flashed a light in her face the other day?"

"No, it is better. You pushed her into a ditch."

"I never knew Muslim women in Noakhali were in the habit of prowling about on the high roads at midnight."

"I can produce her, she is present inside; if only she will consent to come out."

"The 'women' I met the other day were wearing green shirts, khaki pants and servicemen's turbans. One of them had a half-trimmed moustache!"

He laughed. "Could you identify them?"

"I think I can."

"Am I one of them?"

"Did you go out that night?"

"Are any of them included in the present company?" he asked pointing to a group of his men sitting in a semi-circle on one side.

"Are all the people you sent out that night present here?" I asked in return. Again he laughed. Finally he said, "No, I would not believe that of you even if the whole world repeated it, and the world would not believe me even if I did."

Again he started off at a tangent. "I have very great regard for Mr. Gandhi for what he has done for the Bihar Muslims. I must say that I was suspicious of his intentions while he was here. But I bow to him in reverence for what he has done out there. And this I say from what the Leaguers themselves have told me and from what I have seen with my own eyes. I have been to Bihar; yes and to the Punjab also and to the Frontier as far as Peshawar."

Changing the topic he next started to complain against my colleague Viswaranjan Sen. He demanded he must remove his camp from Gopairbag. He was inciting the Hindus to murder the Muslims and had gathered together twenty people there for the purpose. "If he does not, I shall myself go there and kill him."

"You shall do no such thing," I said to him. "I am sure you do not mean it either," I added. "Some people try to appear fiercer than they actually are. Viswaranjan, I tell you, is incapable of hurting a fly. You will have to kill me first. For unless you withdraw your threat, I shall myself go and stay there. Besides it is not true that he has gathered round him twenty men. There are not more than three men in his camp. I shall be the fourth."

"I can produce a thousand persons from this place to corroborate my statement," he said.

"If you can do that it will only prove that you can get a thousand persons in this locality to perjure themselves," I remarked.

By then it was nearly half past eleven of the night. As I started to leave, he surprised me by making a personal request. One of his men had been let out on bail. His bail had expired. Could I address a note to the Superintendent of Police or to the District Magistrate supporting his application for the renewal of the bail? "The District Magistrate puts faith in your word. I can testify to the man's innocence. He is being made to suffer solely because of his association with me."

I found myself in a predicament. There was a glint in his eyes during the latter part of the conversation which suggested a veiled threat behind the polite request. I told him I would have to satisfy myself by an inquiry first that the man was harmless and would not indulge in any further mischief if his bail was extended. For that I would have to come again the next day as it was already nearly midnight.

But Quasim said that the thing had to be done there and then. Next morning the man would have to report himself to the police and unless his bail was renewed he would be taken back in police

custody. He (Quasim) would himself take me to the local Hindus and they would all testify as to the innocence of the man. I told him, I would not like him to put himself to the trouble of accompanying me.

"All right, then I shall ask three of my men to take you wherever you wish." With that he called three of his hand-picked men and asked them to keep me company.

In plain words this meant that I was to be their prisoner till I delivered the goods. Keeping my thoughts to myself, however, I told Quasim that this was unnecessary since I knew my way. All the same, I added, he could instruct his men to keep themselves within hailing distance of me in case I might need them.

He seemed pleased with this and ordered his men to be at my beck and call.

With my colleague I then went the round of the Hindu residents of the locality. Collecting over a dozen of them in the garden of one of them, I bade Quasim's men to stand sentinel at the entrance of the *badi.* I then interviewed each one separately so that they might freely speak out their mind to me without any fear that what they told me would leak out.

I soon found out that they dreaded even more than the renewal of this man's bail the reprisals that would follow if the bail was not renewed. I immediately scribbled a note to Quasim saying that opinion was divided on the issue and in view of the prevailing circumstances, I could not take upon me to interfere with the course of law.

When I came out of the garden, Quasim himself was impatiently waiting outside. A big, bright moon was shining overhead. I gave Quasim my note. Without reading it, he put the note in his pocket, thanking me. At his residence we found gathered together a group of about two dozen Muslims. He said they had come to demand that the local Congress office should be dismantled and the corrugated iron sheets of which it was built distributed among them. Muslims had in the past subscribed to the Congress funds, the structure in question, therefore, belonged to them!

I remarked to Quasim that now that we had met, I hoped we would be renewing our contact pretty frequently.

By this time he had taken out my note and read it. "So it has come to nothing," he said. "I have wasted three hours of my precious time." I told him that I had not come to discuss with him bail applications of his men and my time, too, was precious. Bidding him good-bye, I walked away.

A couple of weeks later a lad while going in broad daylight on the highway was by force taken into a tea-shop by a group of Quasim's men and held there under duress. Descrying the ex-head master of

the local high school passing in front of the shop, he shouted for help and tried to escape but was dragged back. The school-teacher entreated his captors to release the boy and asked them why he was being unlawfully detained. In explanation they concocted a cock-and-bull story that the lad had come there to buy a bottle of "perfumed hair oil" and stolen a ten rupee note from the cash-box while the owner had gone out to obtain it from elsewhere.

"Why should anyone come to a tea shop for hair oil?"

"No, that was a slip of the tongue. He had asked for a packet of cigarettes."

I, arriving on the scene, suggested that after taking down his name and address, they should let the boy go and file a complaint against him with the police. But they said they must send him with the village watchman to the police station. I sent one of our workers to appraise the police of inwardness of the situation. Seeing our worker at the police station the courage of the captors failed them. Leaving their prisoner they bolted.

A most serious incident happened a week later. A well-to-do zamindar of our locality was waylaid by a gang of ruffians in broad daylight while he was going to the Dattapara relief camp and relieved of his money and umbrella. On reaching the camp, he recorded a complaint. Within a couple of hours the report had reached the gangsters. On his way back he was kidnapped by the same gang. He escaped, was given shelter by a Muslim in his house but was traced there by Quasim's men and taken to about half a dozen different places one after another. At some of these places he found gangs of 50 to 60 threatening men armed with lethal weapons.

The zamindar's brother came with the story to my camp in the evening. Viswaranjan and I set out after dark to trace him. As the bulb in my flashlight had fused, we first made for a place close by where there was a Congress camp. We learnt that the kidnapped person had been brought there and was being detained in a mosque. Some of his relations had contacted his captors and were negotiating for his release by payment of a ransom. But on inquiry at the mosque, we learnt that he had been removed from there a little while ago. Wherever we went the story was repeated; we were just too late. At about midnight we met two Muslims.

"Where are you coming from?"

"From Jeebanagar."

That was the place where we had last been told that the victim had been removed. But on reaching Jeebanagar we again found that he had been removed to another place just before our arrival. The brother of the kidnapped person began to lose heart and said, he would rather negotiate his release by payment of a ransom. We told him that in that case he could go his way. We could not be a party to it.

Next morning we met the victim himself. His relations had secured his release by payment of Rs.400 and a promise of further Rs.200. The victim had been made to give an undertaking that he would not reveal the names of his captors and would depose before the authorities that he had not been kidnapped but had only gone to attend a dinner party at the house of a relation! He was shivering from head to foot. He begged us to help him. I told him, he must first give me in writing a statement of the facts in the presence of a witness. This he did.

The police officer, a Muslim, had in the meantime arrived on the scene for inquiry. He was reported to be railing against "Congressmen" and Gandhi Camp workers, and threatening them with prosecution for concocting a false case when "nothing has occurred". I told him to go and see the victim for himself. "He is paralysed with fear and in a state of nervous collapse."

"There is no reason for him to be in that state," the police officer replied pettishly. "He has stated that he was not kidnapped at all; he had only gone out to dine with a relation." "I have just seen him," I told the officer, and narrated the story of our last night's adventures and how the victim had been made to give an undertaking that he would deny having been kidnapped and repeat the story that had been put in his mouth by his captors. "You dare not record his statement in the presence of these men, unless you wish deliberately to whitewash the whole incident," I added, pointing to the group of Quasim's men who had planted themselves round us. Among them were some of the captors of the zamindar, including the man who had on the previous night met us on the way to Jeebanagar. His gaze was now fixed cobra-like on their last night's victim. The police officer was taken aback. "All right; I won't record his statement in the presence of these men," he said, "I shall hear him *in camera*." But the group clamoured that the statement must be recorded then and there in their presence. They even angrily objected to my talking to the police officer in English because they did not know the language. The most surprising thing was that after this, the police officer without any explanation went back on the solemn assurance that he had given only a little while ago and recorded the kidnapped person's statement in the presence of Quasim's gang with the result that the poor man, naturally, repeated the story to which he had been bound under threats as a condition of his release. As soon as he felt safe he withdrew his statement. The gang, however, continued to harass him by demanding the balance of the ransom. The matter was reported to the Commissioner, Chittagong Division. He promised to hold an inquiry. One of the persons implicated later came to Satish Das Gupta, confessed, promised to behave himself in future, and begged

to be saved. Nothing, however, came out of the inquiry. Advantage was taken of some minor discrepancies in the complainant's statement, the result probably of his distracted state of mind, the culprits escaped scot-free, and ultimately the poor man had to seek safety in flight.

* * *

Man's nature often appears to take its colouring from the life of nature around him. In Noakhali the eagle, the king of the birds of the wood, seems to have set the pattern. With half-shut eyes, the plumed potentate of the woods surveys from his high perch on the top of a tree his vast undisputed realm through the long sultry noon. Presently there is a twitter from the woods below. With affronted majesty he gives a loud, fearful, piercing scream. The twitter is instantly hushed. A deathlike stillness settles on the woods once more, the mighty one is pleased and relapses into his semi-somnolent ecstasy of self-satisfied bliss.

This provides a perfect picture of what was happening around us. An organised campaign of scare-mongering by the majority community against the Hindus was in full swing in our part of Noakhali in the last week of March and the beginning of April, 1947. As the Suhrawardy administration began to tighten up the machinery of law and order under the impact of the movement for the partition of Bengal, which threatened to jeopardise the success of the Bengal Premier's ambitious sovereign Bengal scheme (see Chapter VIII), the agents of the ringleaders and other culprits, who were in police custody awaiting trial for their part in the disturbances, became feverishly active. Before this their aim had been to prevent the Hindus from leaving Noakhali, lest once they were beyond their clutches they should depose against them. Under their surveillance in Noakhali they would be safe. Now the policy was to terrorise them to make them withdraw their complaints, or force them to flee so that they might not testify against the culprits at the trial.

The technique they employed was to spread rumours that an even worse terror than the last was to be let loose in Noakhali before long. A Muslim ex-school mistress in a village adjoining ours was found telling Hindu women that she felt very concerned for them as the watchword during the coming pogrom would be to exterminate, not to kidnap or convert. In another village, a Muslim with a show of commiseration asked an old woman who was catching fish in her pond, "How long do you expect to catch fish like that?" The old dame, however, was unmoved. "As long as I live," she replied. In still another village, friendly advice to flee while there was still time was given by a Muslim to his Hindu neighbours. In the village next to mine, a Muslim who had recently returned from Calcutta was

found telling the people that the feeling there was that Calcutta had not yet been fully avenged and preparations were afoot in that Provincial capital to wipe off the score. Upon hearing the report, I went to him with some members of my camp. Confronted he tried to equivocate; how could he have said such a thing? Of course he could not and should not have. The question was whether he had actually made that statement. In the face of this he kept silence. Those whom he had been trying to bully, however, enjoyed his loss of face. It was getting dark. While we were returning to our camp someone, presumably the culprit himself, concealed among the betel groves, pelted us with clods of earth. But our people had by this time learnt not to be scared by such things. One of the women in our party challenged the assailant to come out and darted toward his hiding. A rustle of leaves announced the ruffian's brave exit.

4

Gandhiji had repeatedly told us and the realisation had forced itself upon us early that the success of our mission in Noakhali would ultimately depend on our capacity to mobilise the better instincts of the majority community and to get the Hindu community to shed its cowardice, by courageous, selfless, and loving service of both. Development of Muslim contacts, however, became increasingly difficult after the Muslim boycott which from Hindu agriculture was extended to all Hindu activities. We found ourselves on a *terra incognita* surrounded by an opaque wall of sullen suspicion and hostility. All we could do was patiently to bide our time in hope and faith.

An opportunity presented itself at last. A Muslim cultivator, Kalu Mian by name, had been stricken with near blindness as a result of drugging with mepacrine over a long period without a break. He was in the prime of life, with a frank open expression which only heightened the tragedy of his big, wide-open but sightless eyes. When the Muslim community had become alienated from him, Gandhiji used to say that he would serve his ideal of communal unity by realising his unity with the handful of Muslims that still clung to him, through their service. Taking Kalu Mian under my care, I began to administer to him vitamins, powdered milk and other nourishing food. This I got specially cooked. I served it to him myself lest his relations might take advantage of his goodness and deprive him of it. I also began giving him with my own hand steam-baths, mud-baths, wet-sheet packs and various massages.

My joy knew no bounds when one day Kalu Mian came to

me with a beaming countenance, and said that whereas before he could not count the fingers of an upraised hand at a distance of ten to fifteen cubits, now he could do it without difficulty. "But what is the use," he added with a sigh, "unless from the foot of a coconut tree I can count the overhanging nuts and see distinctly the stems of the jute plants at ground level without bending?" Coconut picking and cutting of jute furnished him his livelihood.

I took Kalu along with me when I went to expostulate with the local Muslims in regard to the boycott of Hindu cultivation. "How will the boycott benefit this man who is flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone?" I asked. "Is it not a sin against man and God to deprive him of his honest occupation? Would you provide him with another job or alternatively undertake to feed him?" They gave no reply to this but it caused deep searching in the hearts of several of them.

Kalu remained with us until he was again able to go about his vocation normally. Whether his recovery was due to the amateur treatment which he received or to the natural process of healing or both combined, he for one was convinced that his cure was due to the blessings of "Mahatma — the man of God". Nothing could seduce him from this conviction.[13] He became a living conduit of goodwill and made it possible for us, when the atmosphere around us was poisoned again, to reach the hearts of many Muslims to renew and invigorate in them faith in humanity, which transcends all boundaries, and in Gandhiji's mission of peace.

What difference does this make? — the sceptic may ask. How can such personal acts change the course of events? These questions betray a constricted view of life. Experience shows that the law of love, when practised even in a small measure, acts as a spreading leaven which is all the more potent because it works silently and unseen. It may not produce immediate dramatic results — though when it is of sufficient intensity, nothing can be more dramatic than the results that flow from it — but it creates a new climate and a new milieu in which things happen and events take a turn that would otherwise have been inconceivable. At least those of us who saw the miracle happen again and again in India under our own eyes should not find this difficult to understand.

The only condition is that all the activity should be linked to the law of love. In our case the power was provided by Gandhiji. The leader in Satyagraha has always to have this in him. For the instruments, it is enough to have discipline, compatibility of will and purpose with the architect and executioner of the design, and above all an understanding of and insight into his purpose and technique. We were well aware of cracks in our practice. But the principle of it held good unfailingly. This anyone who wishes can test for himself.

When the spark of compassion is kindled within the being all fear goes and, filled with its power, even faltering, imperfect human beings can achieve results that are astounding.

Another opportunity followed. One day I found a Muslim child on the wayside. His unwashed clothes stank. He was suffering from boils and ulcers of the scalp. I affectionately patted him on the cheek and took him along with me to our camp. On the way two other urchins joined him. Their condition was no better than his. By the time I reached our camp, there were seven or eight of them — boys and girls. The hair of the girls was matted and full of vermin. All of them were between the ages of five and eight. I cut up two of my old *dhotis* into suitable lengths for the girls to wear while their clothes were drying, after they were bathed. The boys cared as little for clothes once they were in the tank as the shrimps around them. The women in our camp took charge of the girls. Together we rubbed and scrubbed their persons with soap, washed and dried their clothes and cleansed their ulcers with hot decoction of *neem* leaves. We combed their hair and pared their nails and sent them home looking spick and span after giving to each a handful of puffed rice, shreded green coconut and tangy sour-sweet olives (*jalpai*) which grew wild there.

We had hoped that those whom we had bathed and whose clothes we had washed, would thereafter be kept neat and clean by their parents. But we found after a couple of weeks that those whom we had made neat and clean had relapsed into their original state. Their parents perhaps felt that they were absolved from any further responsibility toward their children since we were looking after them. The hair of the girls again became matted and alive with vermin. We had mended their clothes. The result was that their parents would not provide them with fresh clothes even when the old ones fell to tatters. Remonstration was unavailing. They pleaded that they had not the wherewithal to buy soap or clothes. It became obvious to us that we could not educate the children unless we educated their parents and the parents cooperated with us.

During one of Gandhiji's visit to Satish Chandra Das Gupta's Ashram at Sodepur (Calcutta) we were shown a sample of soap made from plantain leaf ash, which contains alkali. Plantain grows like a weed in Noakhali. The disposal of its dead leaves and trunks is, indeed, a problem. The alkali in the plantain ash can be separated by dissolving the ash in four times its volume of water and pouring off the liquor. Boiled with the addition of quicklime the filtrate yields a clear caustic lye. This by the interaction of vegetable oil gives hard or soft soap according to the variety of the oil used. All the ingredients were readily available in Noakhali.

We taught the people the process and soon a number of them began to manufacture their own soap.

To educate the children into proper attitudes and proper habits, and to teach them self-reliance, we set up basic schools, centered on the various home crafts, particularly hand-spinning and the allied processes. At the basic school at the Gandhi Camp headquarters at Kazirkhil, every one of the children had in a month's time provided himself with a bush-shirt, shorts and a cap from yarn of his own spinning. In that self-made uniform they looked and *felt* like different beings.

To overcome the ingrained inertia and indifference of the parents was not so easy. We held every Tuesday a meeting of the people, who could be induced to cooperate with us, from the five (and in the later stages seven) villages embraced by my centre's activity, by rotation in each of them. Members of various batches before starting from their villages fell in regular rows—men and women, boys and girls separately—and came to the place of meeting in an orderly, disciplined manner to the singing of Ramadhun and the accompaniment of *tal*.

Our meetings began with half an hour's sacrificial spinning on the Takli in silence. Those who did not know how to spin were asked to do *tunai*. Newcomers and chance visitors, who could not even do that, were given cotton to open up and clean for subsequent carding with carding bows. This, besides lightening the labour of carding by hundreds of man-hours and inculcating perfect discipline, helped to bring to everybody an awareness of active cooperation in a common endeavour for self-amelioration. A pindrop silence was maintained during the spinning. Care was taken that at the end not a piece of yarn or a lump of cotton lay about unpicked. Untidiness was avoided, as also waste. Since the power of mass non-violence depends upon the successful handling and harnessing of the power of the spirit that is latent in the humblest of beings, every little thing counts. In the context of preparation for non-violence, especially in the mass, therefore, thoroughness and perfection in the execution of these small details is of the very essence of success. Carelessness or inefficiency on the part of the organisers in this regard proves fatal. In fact it is this which distinguishes at sight a genuine enterprise from a spurious one.

No theoretical issues were discussed at our meetings. Only immediate problems touching the daily life of the people concerned were considered. The talk was directed toward finding practical solutions. It brought us all together—Hindus and Muslims—in a common bond of fellowship and voluntary cooperation.

We had started spinning as a recreation and hobby as an antidote to fear. About fifty of us—men, women and children—from three villages met every day in front of a devastated temple to engage

in spinning. They had all suffered during the riots and were living under a pall of fear which threatened to shatter their nerves. Spinning provided an antidote to it *par excellence*. It was done on bamboo Taklis which the spinners made with their own hands. Carding was done by *tunai*. When seed cotton was used, ginning too was done by hand without any appliance.

The fundamental object of every contact and every activity of ours being essentially educative, making of implements was as much a part of the process as learning to use them. So, when we had to initiate the children into spinning, we did not provide them even with Taklis; we taught them to make their own Taklis out of bamboo with a penknife. Similarly, starting with the arrangement of the cotton fibre round the seed in the boll, we made them work out for themselves the rationale of carding and spinning by translating the problem into the language of their everyday personal experience. Their quickened curiosity and inventive faculty then took over and did the rest. For instance, the difference that combing makes when dishevelled hair are to be done into a coiffeur brought home to them the significance of carding. This they could do with their fingers or with a wooden spatula or by a fishjaw comb and finally with a carding bow made by themselves. The analogy between doing the hair into a pigtail and twisting the fibres into yarn was too obvious to be missed. They learnt to draw thread with their fingers. To produce continuous twist, they attached a stem to a betelnut or a hemisphere of unbaked clay or a flat, rounded disc made from a pot-sherd which they twirled by a flick of their fingers. To prevent the thread from slipping after a certain length had been spun and wound on the Takli, they improvised a hook by snarling a piece of double-twisted yarn which was fastened to the tip of the distaff. They separated the seed from cotton by the use of a rolling pin and a wooden board and made the carding bow from a piece of split bamboo and twisted pineapple leaf fibre. Later, with no other tools than a *dao*, a hand-saw and a chisel, they made their own spinning-wheels from bamboo. We collected one bamboo from each family as a donation. Two bamboos gave five spinning-wheels. Satish Das Gupta got templets made of tin in the camp-workshop at Kazirkhil. With these even an amateur after a short training could construct three spinning-wheels in two days. The donor of a bamboo got his spinning-wheel by paying only annas eight as labour charge. Others had to pay Rs. 1-8-0. But the boys and girls in our camp, even without waiting for the templets, with their own hands made fairly serviceable wheels for themselves. Luckily, unlike some other parts of India, in Noakhali, the sophisticated way of life and the stereotyped system of education dear to the British had not yet taken the cunning out of the people's hands. There were several

handlooms lying idle at our centre. They were taken out, dusted, freed from cobwebs and put into commission. Previously, they were used for weaving mostly mill-yarn. The change-over from mill to hand-spun yarn did not prove very difficult.

To stimulate spinning for self-sufficiency, we decided to give one *sari* free from our stock of relief cloth to every spinner who brought self-spun yarn required for one *sari* for weaving. Muslim boys and girls, too, began to come to us in increasing numbers to learn spinning and the allied processes. We extended to them the same facility and like privileges with due consent of the relief organisation concerned. Before many months, the whole place was humming with the music of the spinning-wheel and in the midst of acute cloth shortage all around, the beautiful fresh clothes of those who cooperated with our plans of self-amelioration began to attract everybody's attention.

5

"Oh, the little more, and how much it is! And the little less, and what worlds away!" The truth of these lines was again and again brought home to us during our mission in Noakhali. As the year advanced, and the spring turned into summer, the problem of food shortage became more and more acute. Gratuitous doles and test relief operations had already been stopped and the rainy season brought heavy floods which washed away the vegetable-beds and betel leaf plantations, depriving the people of one of the very few means of livelihood that were still left to them. There was danger that exodus might be forced upon them by sheer economic distress after they had bravely weathered all other storms.

I obtained for our centres from the district authorities 75 maunds of paddy at control price. Two maunds of paddy on being husked yields about forty-two and a half seers of rice. To obviate the need for supervision, we offered to pay one rupee as wages to any one who would deliver one maund of husked rice. The balance they could keep to themselves. To add further to their money's worth, we offered to convert their wages into rice at the controlled price of Rs.16 per maund as against Rs. 40 per maund at which the rice was selling in the black market—the only other source from which the vast majority could and did openly obtain supplies. The only condition we made was that to get the benefit of the concession every man and woman must learn spinning, reading and writing. As paddy has to be boiled and then dried before it is husked, they could easily utilise their time while waiting to learn to read, to write and to spin which we undertook to teach

all those who worked at our centre. The balance of rice was utilised for putting into operation a self-help scheme for village improvement. Anybody who contributed two hours of free voluntary labour for the construction and repair of roads and embankments of tanks or for removing weeds from tanks, or from waterways so choked with water hyacinth that it made traffic by boat from place to place difficult, could have one seer of rice at the controlled price. In this way we were able to shipshape embankments of dozens of tanks and miles of footpaths and waterways in our area, considerably improving communications to the great relief of both Hindus and Muslims.

When this stock was exhausted, I obtained another 50 maunds of paddy. Years ago a friend had made to me a gift of Rs. 500, which was still lying with me. I made use of it to get a local Muslim to purchase for himself and for us paddy from a neighbouring weekly grain market. There was a difference of Rs. 2-8-0 or so per maund between the wholesale price of paddy in this market and the retail price of paddy in the local market. By giving out the paddy for husking and repeating the operation over and over again, we were able to keep nearly thirty-five families going for more than three months. At the end, it left us a net balance o1 rupees sixty-four and odd.

An exhibition to illustrate various activities conducted by the various Gandhi Camps was held at my centre in the month of October. An assessment of the work done under the plan showed that at my centre 171 men had contributed among them 3,986 man-hours of labour in the period from 24th April to 20th July. The work done included among other things cleaning and repairing of 32 tanks and building of 10 bamboo and wooden bridges over waterways. In the neighbouring centre under Kanu Gandhi 399 men, of whom 47 were Muslims, contributed 8,632 man-hours of labour to build nearly 3 miles of roads and footways. Viswaranjan was able in his area round about Gopairbag, in spite of the terrorism rampant there, to get 168 men, including about 23 Muslims, to put in 4,500 man-hours of labour for tank repairs, road construction etc. The number of tree-cotton plants grown by the self-spinners to provide themselves with cotton at his centre was 110. Kanu Gandhi with his punctuality and discipline, vigilance and experience in running camps and superior technical skill in the Khadi processes scored over all the rest in these activities—particularly Khadi.

And all this was made possible by a wise and timely use of a paltry sum of Rs. 500, coupled with a little foresight and organisation, and above all a compelling love and deep sense of oneness and identification with those who suffered.

Often in practising non-violence, one is confronted with a situation when all further progress seems to come to a dead-end and even

prospect of activity appears to vanish. One has then to draw upon one's inner resources for the strength to go on and, what is more important, for discovering new media of activity and modes of action. Sheer self-discipline may be enough in the case of one person to keep him going and prevent his spirit from drooping. Sturdy rationalism may serve another. Humanism may sustain a third. Reasoned religious belief may supply the motive power to still another. But none of these can compare in sustaining quality with faith in God rooted in inner experience. His presence becomes the rock of refuge. In the final analysis, it is all a question of one's temperament and training, background, upbringing and tradition. But discipline whether physical or intellectual is not creative in the true sense; it cannot keep off the ennui that comes of inner starvation. Love — love of God and of His creatures — alone sustains. It alone is creative. It may come to one through good works or through living contact with another who is filled with that love; or one may stumble upon it through what some will call chance or luck, others merit or *punya* acquired in past lives. There is however one *sadhana*—a talisman as Gandhiji put it—which will come handy to everybody. Here are his own deathless words:

> Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to *him*. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him . . . control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and . . . self melting away.

If we look within and then without, we shall find that there are always a multitude of others less favoured by Providence than ourselves. There is, in fact, none in this world so poor, backward or forsaken who on searching will not find someone who is poorer, more backward and more forsaken than he. If we use our advantages in respect of material resources, intellect, social status, personal influence, contacts, know-how and other attainments only to improve the lot of those who are a rung below us in these respects by howsoever little, we shall never be assailed by a sense of frustration or defeat. Every such act performed will indicate to us the next and bring us nearer to the fount of the power that is non-violence. The few who proceed in this way will become many—a force to reckon with. Linked to the power of non-violence, they may even become in the hour of decision

> "a lever to uplift the earth
> And roll it into another course."

This at least within their own sphere.

6

"How many of you had anything to eat before you set out from your home?" I asked children that used to accompany us on the morning round of the villages for community Ramadhun *kirtan*. Only two or three raised their hands in affirmation. The rest were empty though it was then nearly eleven o'clock. Their own and their parents' earnings from the test relief operations (see Vol. I, page 439) had all been swallowed up by the mounting price of rice and other essential commodities. Their cry of hunger, although they were willing and eager to work, when just a handful of puffed rice with a scraping of coconut kernel costing not more than a copper could make for them all the difference between health and malnutrition, wrung my heart. Necessity once again proved the mother of invention. Extraction of coconut oil provided the answer.

Coconut oil extraction was a universal household occupation in Noakhali like cooking. The kernel of coconut (as distinguished from copra) was shreded by means of a scrapper with a serrated edge. The scrapings were kneaded with a little water and "milk" was extracted by straining the mixture through a piece of cloth. What remained was the oilcake or *chhoba*, like lean meat rich in its protein content. The milk on heating in an open pan yielded the oil—a fragrant delicacy which if let stand overnight in winter forms into a solid mass. The residue on being further cooked yields coconut butter or cream (*machka*), a very sweet, cheese-like substance, rich in natural sugars, proteins, minerals and fat—as nourishing as it is appetising.

It was a universal practice in Noakhali to offer every guest or visitor that came to the house water from a green coconut as a mark of hospitality. We decided that thereafter we would go and collect, instead, from each family one ripe coconut as a gift to the children. We would get them to extract oil from the nuts thus obtained, peddle it round, or buy the same for our personal use and out of the proceeds purchase for the little ones puffed rice which with the oilcake and the coconut butter would make their day a little brighter than the yesterday.

When distress became widespread, we extended the scope of the experiment. We called a meeting of all the people who were prepared to cooperate with us in all the five villages round my camp and told them that if they followed our directions, none of them would need to starve or to leave his home through fear of starvation and if starvation came to them in spite of it, we would gladly share our board with them. An Englishwoman of our acquaintance used often to tell Gandhiji that the coconut was nature's perfect food

and that she had kept fit on two coconuts alone a day for months. Some of the local people, too, had testified to us that two ripe coconuts with a handful of rice and greens had enabled them to survive through the most critical phase of the Bengal famine in 1943.

We figured out that oil-cake and coconut-butter between them should represent the entire nutritive content of the coconut less the oil which is found in excess of human requirement in the natural state. Dehydrated and salted, the oilcake could be kept over long periods without deterioration. The addition of a little palm jaggery as a preservative made it into a delicious sweet. Previously the oilcake used to be thrown away or fed to the cattle. We asked the people to dry it by sunning and to stock-pile it so that it could be used to supplement their scanty rations of rice.

The plan was put into operation through what was intended to develop into a multi-purpose cooperative society. Members received four rupees per seer of coconut oil, non-members three rupees only. One of the conditions of membership was that they should become self-sufficient in the matter of clothing for themselves and their family. For it was no use putting money into a pocket with a hole for the benefit of the black marketeer in cloth. The hole had to be stopped first. To this end each member was required to learn spinning and the ancillary processes and get the members of his family to do the same and grow at least four tree-cotton plants for each member of the family. Cotton from these plants would be the property of the cooperative society which would take delivery of, and distribute it free to those who span for themselves. Till an oil-producer qualified himself for membership by delivering the stipulated self-grown cotton, the extra one rupee per seer on oil delivered would be kept in deposit by the society as share capital.

We were offered Rs.5 per seer for our oil by some provision dealers. But we refused their offer, as they would give no guarantee that they would not adulterate the product. Dr. Nripen Bose of the Abhoy Ashram, Comilla, a sister institution for constructive work like the Gandhi Camps, made us a sporting offer to purchase all the oil that we might produce at the uniform market price of Rs. 4 per seer. We were overjoyed. Ours was not a commercial enterprise. Basically it was a moral venture. We delivered the oil in sealed tins only, each tin bearing on it the certificate of its purity, its exact weight and the date of its issue to guarantee the freshness of the oil. To prevent spurious copra oil being palmed off on us by the producers, we further made it a condition that with each lot of the oil the by-products — oilcake and butter — duly dehydrated and preserved should be brought to us for stock-piling.

Production started on the 17th April, 1947. The output for the first fortnight was a little above 4 seers of oil. In the 7th and the 8th,

the penultimate and closing weeks, production aggregated to 266 and 304 seers each, equivalent to Rs.1,216 and Rs.1,964 respectively. The total amount of oil produced was about 50 tins, worth Rs. 3,800. It provided occupation in the closing stages to 130 families, of whom 97 were Hindus and 33 Muslims. It enabled a woman without leaving her home to earn a little over two rupees per day. The total amount put into the pockets of the poor during the two months that the plan was in operation was a little in excess of Rs.1,600, in addition to the share capital in deposit with the cooperative society. This in itself amounted to nearly Rs. 900. Some of the women after one month of activity had saved up to, for the first time in their life, Rs.20 and Rs. 30. The most valuable gain in terms of our mission, however, was the sense of comradeship and cohesion which it developed among the members of the cooperative. When oil had to be transported to Chandpur by water and there was danger of its being looted on the way, one of the toughest guys in our locality undertook to transport it himself in his own boat with the boast, "Who dare touch *our* oil !" And no one dared with Basu Mian in charge.

This did not exhaust the possibilities of the experiment. Coir string and rope made from coconut husk were in universal demand in Noakhali as an indispensable hut-building material, and sold at Rs. 2–8–0 per seer. Satish Das Gupta discovered, as a result of his experiments, a very simple process by which coconut shell could be turned into a variety of beautiful articles of use—hubble-bubbles, sugar pots, vases, buttons. By subjecting the shell to high pressure steam, it could even be moulded. By sand-papering with dried wild fig leaf, which is found in abundance in Noakhali, and buffing on a high speed lathe, it took a high polish. The finished product rivalled in brilliance and beauty articles made from tortoise shell. A lovely tea-cup from coconut shell manufactured at Kazirkhil camp was later presented by me, at Gandhiji's instance, to Lady Mountbatten. She afterwards told me that it occupied the place of honour among her personal treasures.

* * *

When the rice shortage was at its worst, sweet potato sold in Noakhali at two annas per seer as against annas fourteen the seer — the price of rice. The calorie value of sweet potato is about one-third that of rice. Even so it could provide us calories at 42 per cent. of the price of rice. We worked out a famine menu consisting of 5 oz. of rice, 1 oz. of dehydrated and preserved oil-cake and butter-cream mixture, 10 oz. of sweet potatoes and 12 oz. of vegetables like pumpkin, marrow, or greens all cooked together into *khichri*. A tasty and nourishing hotchpotch, it answered extremely well. The holding of common

dinners of people from a number of adjoining or neighbouring villages was much in vogue in Noakhali. To popularise our famine menu, we made it a rule to attend only the functions where the menu devised by us was exclusively served. We also insisted that every invitee bring his own portion of rice, sweet potatoes and the oilcake butter-cream mixture. Then, too, the scheduled castes were invited along with the so-called caste people. No discrimination was permitted. Common dinners used to be a wasteful and extravagant institution before. This converted them into a medium of the education of the people.

Under our self-help and self-sufficiency scheme, 650 fully matured tree-cotton plants and 320 seedlings were grown in the five villages served by my centre. Their estimated yield was 1,950 lbs. of cotton wool equivalent to 8,700 squre yards of cloth. In addition they raised 350 maunds of tubers for food. We had obtained for free distribution a few boxes of vegetable seeds as a gift from some seed merchants of our acquaintance in Calcutta and Poona. We planted the seeds in nursery beds at some of our centres and told the people that we would provide them vegetable seedlings for transplantation if, in the meantime, they would dig and mulch beds, manure and fence them by the day fixed for inspection. Transplantation was done under our personal supervision. We next improvised a "farmers' calendar" for operations like hoeing, weeding, eradication of pests etc. We also introduced a regular system of inspection of the beds in all the villages to prevent laziness, negligence or ignorant handling. We were rewarded for our pains with a bumper crop of vegetables that season. This helped us not a little to tide over the food crisis.

The authorities in Noakhali also had announced that they would distribute vegetable seeds free that winter in view of the damage done by the floods. Their plan miscarrying some district officials came to us, instead, to ask for seeds and seedlings of vegetables for themselves. This, of course, we were glad to provide.

Mango, jackfruit and banana grew in wild profusion in Noakhali. In fact nature here seems to be crazily bountiful. There are creepers that bear potato at the root as well as on the stems, *batabi lebu* (sour limes) as big as a football, whole jungles of *jalpai* (olives) *amlaki* (gooseberry) *haritki* (myrobalan) besides the fruit already named. To forestall the food shortages in future, we decided that we would organise the preservation and stocking of jackfruit seed, which is very nutritious. Mango kernel, when dried and powdered and freed from its astringent tannic acid content by repeated washings in water, could be used as flour. Unripe banana can likewise be dried and ground into meal, while ripe banana and the pulp of jackfruit and mango could be preserved by drying in the sun. Later Satish Das Gupta devised a very simple technique, which even a villager

could learn, for assaying and controlling the PH index of the fish-ponds and use it to increase fish production.

* * *

Making of coconut oil had to be suspended all of a sudden on the 12th June, 1947, when we found that the railway authorities had stopped giving us transport facilities for our products unless we could obtain special permission. Before this could be done, cheap copra oil from Cochin, whose import had been interrupted for a while, again flooded the market. Successful resumption of our experiment on a competitive basis depended upon full exploitation of all other economies of the coconut besides oil. For this we needed the help of a few machines. To get them constructed would have taken time. In the meanwhile something had to be done to keep the ball rolling. A variety of tuber known as *shati* grew wild in several parts of Noakhali. It was scraped by means of a perforated piece of tin and the bitter alkaloid removed by soaking the scrapings in water and repeated washings. These were then dried, ground fine and sieved through a piece of cloth. *Shati* powder thus prepared is highly valued as an invalid food in Bengal and commands a wide and ready market. We offered to pay one rupee per seer of *shati* powder delivered at the centre. A business-man of our acquaintance at Calcutta had promised to take delivery of all our stock and sell it for us on a non-profit basis. We had fixed a target of 500 maunds for the season. We put at the disposal of the villagers several of our camp boats for the gathering and transport of the roots.

At this stage I had to go to Delhi in answer to Gandhiji's call. Owing to this only 10 maunds of the powder could be collected. It brought to the producers over and above their labour charge a sum of Rs. 579.

7

People in one of the villages served by my centre had decided to rebuild their devastated temple and to hold the ceremony of *prana-pratistha* or reinstalling the image in it. They asked for a note to the Rationing Officer to enable them to obtain a piece of rationed cloth for an *asana* or altar cloth for their image. It was bad enough that they had to depend on the rationing agency for covering their nakedness and now their temple deity, too, it seemed, would have to be placed on "ration"! This was insufferable. I asked them to collect all the Takli yarn which they and their children had spun. No matter how coarse and uneven the cloth woven might be, I felt, it would be more pleasing to their deity than the rationed stuff. All the Takli yarn was accordingly collected and after doubling woven

into a piece of *dosuti* cloth, 4 cubits long by 26 inches wide by a local Harijan weaver, who happened to be himself a devotee.

They next wished to raise money for distributing sacramental sweets after the ceremony. I told them that the favour of the deity was not to be *bought*. It was obtained by one's "blood, sweat and tears". Every day they produced oil for themselves. Would not they for one day engage in it as a labour of love for their deity? They agreed to do so. Two hundred and fifty coconuts were accordingly purchased and distributed among various families that evening and men and women and children set to work with a joy and an enthusiasm which had only to be seen to be believed. Kitchen fires were kept burning in most homes till midnight. The net income from the proceeds of the oil produced after deducting the cost exceeded Rs.16. Out of this Rs. 4 was used for purchasing jaggery for the sweets. The by-products, coconut cream and oilcake were made into a delicious *sandesh* and provided *prasad* at the evening ceremony in such abundance that everybody ate to repletion. Still it left a net saving of Rs.12 —*Daridra-narayan*'s gift to his devotees.

The temple was rebuilt by the villagers themselves mostly by voluntary labour. The earth for the plinth was dug from the adjoining tank. This deepened and improved it. The mats upon which the congregation sat were woven by a widowed refugee sister of the village from cane grown in her own yard. As a part of the ceremony, the villagers cleared their tank of water hyacinth and repaired its dilapidated embankment and steps leading down to the water's edge. So high was the enthusiasm that the villagers, including some who were suffering from malaria, laboured till late in the night.

Explaining the significance of the event to the gathering after the ceremony, I told them how their labour of love had converted the inert *Thakur* (deity) into a living God. He would keep them, if only they kept their covenant with Him. It was not their God that had deserted them as some of them had complained; it was they, on the contrary, who had bartered their God for their miserable earthly possessions and existence. Again, some of them had been reported as saying that God's justice had gone to sleep. If they searched their hearts, I said to them, they would find that He, the stern reckoner, alone was awake, when they imagined that He was asleep. He could not be hoodwinked. He had weighed in the scales of his inexorable justice their iniquities, and had meted out to them in the same measure as they had meted out to their less fortunate brethren. They must welcome back to their bosom those whom they had suppressed and kept out of their own if they expected His forgiveness and mercy. They had lost Him for the time being. If they pledged themselves to be faithful to Him thereafter and never again to barter their faith and honour even to

save their life, He would come back to them and dwell in their midst and protect them again. They had weathered the dark days of lawlessness and terror following upon the communal upheaval by enveloping themselves in the protecting mantle of Ramanama. By what they had done that day, they had given body to their faith. A precarious future faced them. There was the possibility of East Bengal being incorporated in a sovereign Bengal State or going to Pakistan in the event of India being partitioned. In either case they would be cut off from India and find themselves in the position of a permanent minority dependent for its safety and survival entirely on their inner resources. But even a minority of one, Gandhiji had taught them, could convert itself into a majority by allying itself with God. Their experience that day had shown them how this could be done:

> Your God will not only fill you with faith which dispels all fear but also provide you with food and raiment so that you will never need to go naked or hungry if you pledge yourself to serve Him as you have done today.

The pledge was taken by all observing silence for two minutes.

Gandhiji was delighted when I told him in December, 1947, at Delhi the story of the inert *Thakur* in that remote outpost becoming a living God. According to the latest report that had just come, 11 spinning-wheels and 22 Taklis were plying daily in front of that temple at that time. The total quantity of yarn spun by the spinners in the five villages was over one maund. In a month or so, every one of the spinners expected to have at least one piece of cloth woven out of the yarn spun by himself or herself.

CHAPTER IV

GANDHIJI AND THE NEW VICEROY

1

THE CHOICE of Lord Mountbatten of Burma as the Viceroy of India in succession to Lord Wavell was a stroke of genius on Mr. Attlee's part. No-one else was better fitted for the task. His royal lineage coupled with his record of war services put his patriotism above criticism or doubts and provided the most effective safeguard against any misrepresentation of the Labour Government's decision to put British rule in India into voluntary liquidation.

Possessed of an almost daemonic energy, the new Viceroy, too, could work, like Gandhiji, round the clock and still keep fresh and mentally alert. We have a vivid pen-picture of a Mountbatten breakfast by the author of *Mission with Mountbatten*, when last minute dictation, toast and tea, all competed for the services of the Viceroy-designate's mouth, the meal generally coming off second best! Precise and systematic in his habits, he was gifted with a keen, versatile mind, and an immense capacity for clear, sustained, concentrated thinking. This enabled him to go straight to the fundamentals of a problem. His brilliance, dash and resourcefulness made "the light-hearted boon companion of the Prince of Wales" in the gay '20s "the hero-worshipped chief of the commandos",[1] and finally Churchill's choice as the Supreme Commander of the South-East Asia Command during the Second World War. He joined to these a poise, personal charm and high-mindedness which have become associated with his name.

In some respects, however, there was a striking contrast between him and Gandhiji. Six feet two inches tall, tough as a whip-cord, fond of lime-light, colour, parades, uniforms and gadgets, Mountbatten was a keen sportsman with ambition to excel, which to his chagrin earned him the nickname of "play-boy". The Mahatma's only incursion in the field of sports, to my knowledge, was perhaps during his last detention at Poona when he performed the "opening ceremony" of a badminton court for his co-prisoners and on the fifth or seventh attempt managed to send the shuttlecock over to the wrong side!

As the Supreme Commander of South-East Asia Command, Mountbatten had developed a system of planning operations with

the help of a team of hand-picked collaborators with whom he shared his thinking aloud. He carried that system with him to India into the field of politics. After every important interview he set apart a few minutes for dictating notes of the conversation before proceeding to the next appointment. These notes were indexed, multigraphed and circulated to the members of his staff to enable them to keep track of every move he made. Gandhiji, on the other hand, would send his secretary — who was to him son, assistant, cook, shoe-black and *hamal* (porter) rolled into one — in the midst of an important political discussion, to apply a nature-cure mud-pack to an ailing colleague or ward, or to improvise an ash-tray for a chain-smoking member of the Congress Working Committee. He attached more value to these as a contribution to his political effort. The one felt at home only in his mud hut, among the members of his Ashram, the other found himself in his element in the palatial Viceroy's House with its 340 rooms, a mile and a half of corridors, an army of red-liveried servants and armed guards, and a population of 7,000 on the Viceregal Estate.

The contrast extended to their methods of work, too. Every move of Mountbatten was elaborately planned in advance, timed with split-second accuracy and reinforced with the full mechanics of a most up-to-date publicity technique. Before proceeding to an important function, he assiduously rehearsed his part until he was letter-perfect. Gandhiji, on the other hand, implicitly believed in the dictum: "Do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; say whatever comes to your lips at the moment." His philosophy was summed up in Henry Newman's "One step enough for me". He used to say, "God will indicate to me the next step at the right time, not a moment before." His "preparation" during negotiations with the Viceroy on a crowded day crammed with dove-tailing engagements from 3 o'clock in the morning onwards included: (1) meticulously sitting down to practise writing the Bengali script as a daily renewal of his covenant with the people of Noakhali to "do or die" in pursuit of his peace mission; (2) giving a ten minute lesson in the Gita to Manu as part of the duty he owed her; (3) discussing with Badshah Khan his ailment and prescribing a herbal cure for it; (4) drawing 194 yards of yarn as part of his daily sacramental spinning; (5) reciprocating by eye-rolling and facial contortions the mimicry of his four-year old grandson, Gopu, who had come to "play" with his grandfather on his day of weekly silence; (6) trying to quell the fanaticism of those who wanted him to give up the recitation of verses from the Koran at his evening prayer meeting; and (7) giving his time and offering appropriate advice in turn to a Maharaja, Pandit Nehru and Dr. Sjahrir, the Indonesian Premier; (8) obliging an autograph-hunter, also a refugee woman

darshan-seeker from the Punjab. All these were of equal importance in his eyes. They were integral parts of his striving for full practice of truth and non-violence in his daily life.

Before coming to India, Mountbatten had taken care to arm himself with the goodwill of the opposition leaders. Among those whom he particularly canvassed to assure himself of their support beforehand was Churchill. He had sufficient acumen, further, to see Mr. Attlee and make clear from the very start that there would have to be the earliest time limit for the withdrawal of British power from India. When the second half of 1948 was proposed for the purpose, he suggested that the second half should mean June, 1948, rather than December! To leave not a shadow of a doubt as to the object of his appointment, he insisted upon being given a very clear directive. The guiding principles of this directive, in the drafting of which he was given a free hand, were that he was to try to obtain a unitary Government, according to the Cabinet Mission plan, for British India and the Indian States, "if possible within the British Commonwealth".[2] If by the 1st October, 1947, he found that there was no prospect of a settlement "on the basis of unitary Government", he was to report to the British Government on steps that should be taken for the transfer of power on the due date. The insertion of the clause "within the British Commonwealth" was at his special request and provided a clue to the line of diplomacy which he was subsequently to follow in India.

Lord Wavell had shown an unfortunate weakness to be guided almost wholly by the die-hard elements in the services, with disastrous consequences to himself and to India. The British services had always been very conservative. They had never expected that a Labour Government would come into power in England so soon and that their hero, Churchill, would get, to use his own inimitable expression, "the boot" from the British voters after the war was over. They could not acclimatise themselves to the great political changes that in spite of themselves had overtaken them. Mountbatten took care to bring with him additional staff of his choice. The team included veterans like Lord Ismay, Churchill's right-hand man during the Second World War; and Sir Eric Mieville, one-time private secretary to Lord Willingdon, a former Viceroy at the time Ismay had held the position of his military secretary. To insure continuity and loyal cooperation of the services in India, he let George Abell, Lord Wavell's private secretary, continue at his post. Nor did he leave publicity to chance. As an addition to the normal Viceregal staff, he brought with him, as his Press Attache, Alan Campbell-Johnson, the erstwhile recorder and keeper of his war diaries, and later the author of *Mission with Mountbatten*. Last but not least, a "secret weapon" of no small strategic value in Lord Mountbatten's arsenal

of personal diplomacy was Lady Mountbatten, a heroine in her own right and a social worker of front-rank distinction, who by her unfailing tact, warm womanly sympathy and fine discrimination provided just what her impetuous husband needed most. She was to act as his guardian angel on more than one occasion during his difficult mission.

2

The first act of Lord Mountbatten on arrival in India on the 22nd March, 1947, was to send two letters to Jinnah and Gandhiji, inviting them to meet him. Gandhiji was touring riot-affected areas in Patna district in Bihar when the Viceregal invitation reached him. The next day he replied:

> You have rightly gauged my difficulty about moving out of Bihar at the present moment. But I dare not resist your kind call. I am just now leaving for one of the disturbed areas of Bihar. Will you, therefore, forgive me if I do not send you the exact date of my departure for Delhi? I return from this third Bihar tour on the 28th instant. My departure will therefore be as quickly as I can arrange it after the 28th.[3]

Gandhiji left Patna for Delhi on the 30th March, travelling third-class. Lord Mountbatten had offered to send his personal York plane to fetch him but he declined the offer. He similarly turned down the suggestion for a special train. But a member of his party had a brain-wave. She had two compartments reserved for the party instead of the usual one. For this, she had soon to shed tears. At the next stop the station master was sent for. The Mahatma expressed his regret that other passengers had been deprived of much-needed accommodation. The poor station master offered to attach another compartment to make up for it, but that was beside the point. The extra compartment was vacated and the right standard of congestion restored in the Mahatma's own!

No secretariat worth the name accompanied him. The staff had all been left behind either in Noakhali or in Bihar. So he had to attend to most of his secretarial work himself. A devoted co-worker had asked for his approval to proceed to the States for treatment of his deafness. He received a reply from the train in the Mahatma's own hand: "How can you think of going to America for your operation when so many like you in India cannot? You should be content with what India has to offer, aided by Ramanama."

At a small side-station near Delhi arrangements had been made for him to detrain. On the way to his residence in the Bhangi

Colony, he got out of the car and had his morning walk. This he never missed. It was the secret of his undiminished physical and mental resilience.

At three in the afternoon on the same day, 31st March, 1947, he had his first meeting with the Viceroy. Very little politics was discussed. The Viceroy desired to know all about his early life, his education, his sojourn in England and subsequent struggles in South Africa and in India. On his part, Gandhiji was equally eager to meet the whole man in the Viceroy. There was also perhaps a tacit recognition on both sides that this was practically their last chance of a peaceful settlement of the Indo-British question. Gandhiji returned from the meeting greatly impressed by the Viceroy's sincerity, gentlemanliness and nobility of character.

At 3 next morning Gandhiji was up as usual, though he had retired to bed very late the preceding night. At 5 o'clock Rajkumari Amrit Kaur came to see him. Maulana Azad followed at half-past-six. As a result the morning walk and the massage were delayed. The lag was made up by cutting down the time for massage. This was also the time when he relaxed and had a brief nap. But then Pandit Nehru came. A chair was placed alongside the massage table and the interview and the massage proceeded simultaneously. The massage over, he was about to have his bath when Rajaji turned up. Interview took place while the Mahatma lay in his bath-tub. In the meanwhile Manu went ahead with the shave to save time. Rajaji could not help cracking a few jokes. He remarked to Manu, "So you have become honorary barber to your illustrious grandfather!" The brief diversion gave baulked nature its chance and the Mahatma had very sound sleep for a few minutes as he lay in the bath-tub! When he came out of the bath-room, Dr. Rajendra Prasad was waiting for his appointment. It took place during breakfast. The meal was hardly over, when at 9 a.m. the Sardar came to take Gandhiji for the meeting with the Viceroy.

It was in this setting that the meeting took place in the open on a terrace in the Viceregal garden. It was a typical spring morning, cool and fresh. The sun shone mildly through a soft, pearly haze. The flower-beds in the Moghul Garden were a blaze of colour.

The Mahatma's lunch was brought in the middle of the meeting by Manu and Brijkrishna Chandiwala, one of Gandhiji's secretaries.

Introduction over, the Viceroy remarked to Manu: "You are a lucky girl. My daughter tells me she feels jealous of you on seeing your photographs with Mr. Gandhi. I shall be sending her to attend your prayer meeting."

While the one had his lunch and the other his tea, an A.D.C. photographed them together.

Gandhiji asked the Viceroy if Manu could, in the meantime, roam about the garden so that they could proceed with their talk uninterrupted.

"Certainly," replied the Viceroy. Then addressing Manu, he added: "All this is yours; we are only trustees. We have come to make it over to you."

"You can search her person for any hidden arms," Gandhiji put in laughing.

"I am perfectly satisfied there can be no need for that in a disciple of yours," replied the Viceroy with a smile.

The narrative was taken up from the point where it had been left the previous day. The Viceroy told Gandhiji that it had always been the British policy not to yield anything to force, but the Mahatma's non-violence had won. They had decided to quit as a result of India's non-violent struggle. Towards the close, on being invited to do so, Gandhiji placed before the astonished Viceroy his solution of the Indian deadlock.

He reiterated what he had said often before that he did not mind Jinnah or the Muslim League turning the whole of India into Pakistan, provided it was done by appeal to reason and not under threat of violence. But while he had previously held that this could be properly done only after the British had quitted, and while in principle he still adhered to that view, the crux of his present proposal was that he was now prepared under Mountbatten's umpireship — not as Viceroy but as man — to invite Jinnah to form a Government of his choice at the Centre and to present his Pakistan plan for acceptance even before the transfer of power. The Congress would give its whole-hearted support to the Jinnah Government. At the same time since the Muslim League would now be the Government, it would have no further excuse for continuing the movements of organised lawlessness which it had launched in some of the Provinces. These must be called off. Further, since the Viceroy had declared that he was out to do justice only and *nothing would be yielded to force*, if the League did not accept the offer, the same offer *mutatis mutandis* should be made to the Congress. The old policy of trying to please both parties must be given up.

This course the Viceroy was unable to follow. His preference naturally was in terms of his directive for a solution "which leaves such good feeling that the Indian parties will want to remain within the Commonwealth." This was intrinsically an admirable and worthy sentiment but a curious irony of history had charged it with a tragic implication. Jinnah was not prepared to look at any formula which might even by implication commit him to a recognition of India as one entity, and among the British officials it was a "political

commonplace" that with the transfer of power "Pakistan would become the last outpost of British Imperialism" and "the anti-British bias of Congress would quickly prevail."[4] The part relating to "the anti-British bias" of Congress was found to be an erroneous prejudice before long and at least one British adviser of the Viceroy admitted it to an Indian colleague of his, as on the independence day he saw from the balcony of the Viceroy's House the surging Indian crowds according to Lord Mountbatten, as the first Governor-General, an ovation which for the moment put Congress leaders in the shade. But for the time being their pet prejudice prevailed and they threw their weight against Gandhiji's plan. Apart from the danger of a civil conflagration this would have forced them to make their choice between the Congress and the League and drop one or the other "packet", to use Lord Morley's phrase, from the Commonwealth bag. Lord Mountbatten felt he could not risk the practical for the problematical, even though the latter might appear to be the ideal solution, and so they were all drawn into the deep tragedy which held the whole situation in its grip and in which the British Government was consciously or unconsciously cooperating, to bring about the failure of its own declared intentions. Like characters in a Greek tragedy they were victims of the sins of their predecessors from the consequences of which there was no escape. Gandhiji told the Viceroy what must have sounded to his ears cruel that the system of British policy of "divide and rule" had brought about a situation in which the only alternative to a continuation of the British rule, which they had found was no longer feasible, was to accept the logic of the "Quit India" demand and retire unconditionally leaving India to her fate. The role of peace-maker in the "communal triangle" which they had themselves helped to create was not for them.

3

The following is an outline of the plan which Gandhiji put before the Viceroy:

1. Mr. Jinnah to be given the option of forming a Cabinet.

2. The selection of the Cabinet is left entirely to Mr. Jinnah. The members may be all Muslims, or all non-Muslims, or they may be representatives of all classes and creeds of the Indian people.

3. If Mr. Jinnah accepted this offer, the Congress would guarantee to cooperate freely and sincerely, so long as all measures that Mr. Jinnah's Cabinet bring forward are in the interests of the Indian people as a whole.

4. The sole referee of what is or is not in the interests of India as a whole will be Lord Mountbatten, in his personal capacity.

5. Mr. Jinnah must stipulate, on behalf of the League or of any other parties represented in the Cabinet formed by him that, so far as he or they are concerned, they will do their utmost to preserve peace throughout India.

6. There shall be no National Guards or any other form of private army.

7. Within the frame-work hereof Mr. Jinnah will be perfectly free to present for acceptance a scheme of Pakistan even before the transfer of power, provided however that he is successful in his appeal to reason and not to the force of arms, which he abjures for all time for this purpose. Thus, there will be no compulsion in this matter over a Province or a part thereof.

8. In the Assembly the Congress has a decisive majority. But the Congress shall never use that majority against the League policy simply because of its identification with the League but will give its hearty support to every measure brought forward by the League Government, provided that it is in the interest of the whole of India. Whether it is in such interest or not shall be decided by Lord Mountbatten as man and not in his representative capacity.

9. If Mr. Jinnah rejects this offer, the same offer to be made *mutatis mutandis* to Congress.

The Viceroy found the plan "attractive" and suggested that Gandhiji should discuss it with Lord Ismay, his Chief of Staff, so that Ismay could cast it into proper shape. But whereas Gandhiji had understood that the Viceroy wished the plan to be reduced to a formal agreement, the Viceroy and his advisers, it seems, had in the meantime come to a different decision. The Viceroy felt that he had moved too impetuously in allowing himself to be almost persuaded to advocate Gandhiji's plan before he knew what the alternatives were and what the views of the other parties were.

The plan was discussed in the Viceroy's staff meeting on the 5th April, and dubbed "an old kite flown without disguise".[5] The consensus of opinion was that "Mountbatten should not allow himself to be drawn into negotiation with the Mahatma, but should only listen to advice."[6]

Ever since the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931, the officials at New Delhi had regarded the pact with the Mahatma to have been a political blunder of the first magnitude on Lord Irwin's part, which must never be allowed to be repeated. The Sardar's opposition to any such plan was well known and the Viceroy's advisers felt pretty sure that he would stand his ground. But there was a nervous

apprehension that Pandit Nehru might succumb to the Mahatma's influence if he remained under the impression that the Viceroy favoured the Mahatma's plan. In one of his letters to Pandit Nehru, Gandhiji referred to the "surrounding atmosphere of which the Indian element is the author" and which might "overwhelm" the Viceroy "as it may well do any of us".[7] The free-lance advice, "tips", and "inside information" about Indian leaders, their personal weaknesses, idiosyncrasies and even internal alignments which these friends were ready to purvey to the British officials could not have inspired them or the Viceroy with much respect for Indian character. Some of them later claimed credit for putting across to the Indian leaders formulas which they had previously denounced as unpatriotic. At Lord Mountbatten's instance, the matter was again discussed among the members of his staff on the afternoon of the 5th April. The conclusion reached at the end of the day was that "it was essential to make clear to Nehru *before Gandhi get to work too hard upon the Congress* that Mountbatten was far from being committed to the Gandhi plan, and that it would need careful scrutiny."[8] (Italics mine). Pandit Nehru was accordingly fortified with the Viceroy's second thoughts. When he saw Gandhiji that day with a note from Lord Ismay, it was with "at least one fatal objection to the plan". That did not discourage Gandhiji. Still under the impression that he had the Viceroy whole-hog with him, he hopefully wrote to him that Pandit Nehru's difficulty could be overcome if they two were of one mind. In answer he was informed that his original policy of learning a great deal more about the problem before taking any line was the one which the Viceroy intended to follow. And so the friendship that had commenced so happily received a severe jolt at the very start:

Gandhiji to Lord Ismay 5th April, 1947

> Pandit Nehru gave me what you have described as an outline of a scheme. What I read is merely a copy of the points I hurriedly dictated, whereas, I understood from His Excellency the Viceroy, you were to prepare a draft agreement after the lines of the points I had dictated. . . .

Lord Ismay to Gandhiji 6th April, 1947

> I think that there has been some misunderstanding about the form of the short note which I prepared last Friday. As I understood it, Lord Mountbatten . . . asked if you would be so good as to spare a little more time for a talk with me about your plan, in order that I might prepare a short note summarising its salient features in general terms. He had no intention . . . that I should attempt any thing formal or elaborate. . . . He confirms that my interpretation of his wishes was correct.

Gandhiji to Lord Ismay 6th April, 1947

The very thought that at the threshold of my friendship with Lord Mountbatten and you, there can be any misunderstanding at all fills me with grave doubt about my ability to shoulder the burden I have taken upon my weak self. . . . I can only say that there must be some defect in my understanding or my attentiveness if I misunderstand very simple things. I do not feel inclined to reproduce the talk about this topic except to mention one thing, viz. that H. E. mentioned Menon (V. P. Menon, the Reforms Commissioner) to you and said you should prepare something in conjunction with him and I was to give you the points which were to become the basis of the draft you were to prepare. . . .

Since writing this, Badshah Khan came into my room and I find that he confirms the gist of the conversation with Lord Mountbatten as described by me and adds that when we went to your office I told you that I had only to give the points as I hastily thought of them in order to enable you and your draftsman to prepare a draft agreement.

Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji 7th April, 1947

Ismay has shown me your letter to him of 6th April, and we both are most upset to think that any act, or omission, on our part should in any way increase the great burden you are bearing. I therefore think it right to send you the following personal explanation.

As we were parting last Friday afternoon, I said that your plan had many attractions for me and . . . I asked Ismay to make a note of its salient features, and I authorised him to talk it over in confidence with the Reforms Commissioner. I am extremely sorry if by these observations I gave you the impression that I wished your plan reduced to the terms of a formal agreement.

As I explained to you during the many talks that we have enjoyed, my aim has been and is to keep a perfectly open mind until I have had the advantage of discussions with important Indian political leaders with the object of seeking an agreement between all parties, so that peace can be restored in the country and an acceptable basis for transfer of power be worked out. When these preliminary conversations have been completed, I shall then have to make up my mind as to what I am going to recommend to His Majesty's Government, and before I do so, I shall most certainly take advantage of your kind offer of further discussion with you.

Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten 8th April, 1947

Many thanks for your two letters of 7th instant. As to the first, I am glad that as I read it, whatever misunderstanding if there was any, was of no consequence.

The concluding portion of Gandhiji's letter to Lord Ismay of the 5th April, ran: "I must add that Pandit Nehru has at least one fatal objection to the outline. But I will not tax you with its mention here. If the outline appears workable to His Excellency, I would like to wait on him once more and discuss Pandit Nehru's objection."

That stage, however, never arrived. The Congress High Command's wagon had by then been irrevocably hitched to Lord Mountbatten's star. A gradual change had been coming for some time over the mind of the Congress High Command, particularly under the impact of Lord Wavell's plan for the transfer of power. The salient feature of that plan was transfer of power Provincewise, with dissolution of the existing Centre. This, with six hundred and odd Indian States, all declared independent; the Muslim League Provinces forming themselves into a separate State by voluntary association, which, as things stood, would have meant the loss to the Indian Union of the whole of Bengal and perhaps also the Punjab; certain parts of the country that were centrally administered left without any constituted authority; partisan factions in the administration, in the army and in the police free to accentuate the internal disruption, would have meant confusion and chaos all over the country. The prospect was disturbing for the Congress leaders. Slowly the pendulum began to swing in favour of letting the Muslim League Provinces form themselves into a separate State (which in any event could not be prevented) while demanding a division of the Punjab and Bengal. A picture of a cross section of the Congress mind is furnished by a letter that Sardar Patel wrote to a friend in Bombay on the 4th March, 1947, before Lord Mountbatten's arrival in India:

> If the League insists on Pakistan, the only alternative is the division of the Punjab and Bengal. They cannot have the Punjab as a whole or Bengal. . . . I do not think that the British Government will agree to division. In the end, they will see the wisdom of handing over the reins of Government to the strongest party. Even if they do not . . . a strong Centre with the whole of India—except Eastern Bengal and a part of the Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan—enjoying full autonomy under the Centre will be so powerful that the remaining portions will eventually come in.[9]

It was in a Noakhali jungle, in the last week of February, 1947, that the plan of tearing Bengal into two was brought to Gandhiji's

attention by Dr. Amiya Chakravarty. Gandhiji was visibly pained by it. What was then a faint whisper now became a "trumpet call". On the 4th April, a statement signed by the Hindu members of the Central Legislature from Bengal was submitted to the Viceroy. It demanded the formation of a separate, autonomous Province of West Bengal within the Indian Union. It also called attention to the immediate need for the introduction, as a transitional measure, of two regional administrations with separate Ministries under a common Governor for the two parts of Bengal. This was necessary, it added, for the avoidance of further bloodshed. On the same day, the Executive Committee of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee passed the following resolution: "If His Majesty's Government contemplate handing over its power to the existing Government of Bengal, which is determined on the formation of Bengal into a separate sovereign State and which by its composition is a communal party Government, such portions of Bengal as are desirous of remaining within the Union of India should be allowed to remain so and be formed into a separate Province within the Union of India."

Gandhiji strove with the Congress Working Committee for the acceptance of the plan he had outlined to the Viceroy. The weather was gruelling, tempers ran high, there were heated discussions, confused counsels, frayed nerves. Gandhiji and Badshah Khan were strongly opposed to any partition under the British aegis. To Gandhiji's mind, for the Congress to ask for partition of the Punjab and Bengal by the British sounded like a counsel of despair. He was opposed to the whole logic of partition. Partition would solve none of their difficulties. On the contrary, it would accentuate those that were already there and create fresh ones. But he could not convince them, nor they him. The next day he reported to the Viceroy his failure to carry the Working Committee with him. He and his colleagues had come to the parting of ways.

Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten 11th April, 1947

I had several short talks with Pandit Nehru and an hour's talk with him alone; and then with several members of the Working Committee last night about the formula I had sketched before you and which I had filled in for them with all the implications. I am sorry to say that I failed to carry any of them with me except Badshah Khan.

I do not know that having failed to carry both the head and heart of Pandit Nehru with me, I would have wanted to carry the matter further. But Panditji was so good that he would not be satisfied until the whole plan was discussed with the few members of the Congress Working Committee who were present.

I felt sorry that I could not convince them of the correctness of my plan, from every point of view. Nor could they dislodge me from my position although I had not closed my mind against every argument. Thus I have to ask you to omit me from your consideration.

Congressmen who are in the Interim Government are stalwarts, seasoned servants of the nation, and therefore so far as the Congress point of view is concerned, they will be complete advisers.

I would still love to take the place that the late C. F. Andrews took. He represented no-one but himself. And if you ever need my service on its merits it will be always at your disposal.

In the circumstances above mentioned, subject to your consent, I propose, if possible, to leave tomorrow for Patna.

On the 12th April, he left for Patna. From the train, on the following day he wrote to Sardar Patel:

There was one thing I wanted to ask you but could not as there was no time. . . . I see I ought now to write something in *Harijan*. . . . I also see that there is a wide and frequent divergence of views between us. In the circumstances, is it desirable that I should see the Viceroy even in my individual capacity?

Think over it dispassionately, keeping only the country's interest before you. Discuss it with others if you like. There should not be even a shadow of suspicion in your mind that I am making a grievance of it. I am only thinking as to what my duty is in terms of the highest good of the country. It is just possible that in the course of administering the affairs of the millions you can see what I cannot. Perhaps I too would act and speak as you do if I were in your place.

And so they all—Mountbatten, the Congress Working Committee and the Muslim League—for different reasons and differing one from the other, went together into the same cry and the "nation's voice" became a "voice in the wilderness", in the arena of high politics in the land of his birth. With her motherly instinct Sarojini Naidu discerned the poignant pathos of the situation, his utter spiritual loneliness, the wide gulf that separated him from his friends and opponents alike, and which at three score and eighteen was sending him once again to plough his lonely furrow in Bihar, that land of devastated villages and ruptured human relationships, where over a quarter of a century ago he had made his *debut* in Indian politics and launched upon a career which in the course of a single generation had changed the face of the country under their very eyes:

Beloved Pilgrim:

You are, I learn, setting out once more on your chosen *Via Dolorosa* in Bihar.

The way of sorrow for you may indeed be the way of hope and solace for many millions of suffering human hearts. Blessed be your pilgrimage.

I am still incredibly weak or I should have attempted to reach the Harijan Colony to bid you farewell.

But even though I do not see you, you know that my love is always with you — and my faith.

Your Ammajan,
Sarojini

4

A side issue to the talks with the Viceroy was the joint appeal for communal peace over the signatures of Jinnah and Gandhiji under Mountbatten's aegis. On the eve of his departure for Noakhali, in the month of October, 1946, when Lord Wavell had made a similar proposal, Gandhiji had felt that it was addressed to the wrong person. But circumstances had since changed; both sides had tarred themselves with the same brush. His old objection still remained. But Lord Mountbatten pleaded that if Gandhiji did not sign Jinnah would not. His signing the appeal would inspire confidence in the masses and help stop the holocaust. In the face of that argument Gandhiji could not say "No". The following was the text of the appeal:

> We deeply deplore the recent acts of lawlessness and violence that have brought the utmost disgrace on the fair name of India and the greatest misery to the innocent people irrespective of who were the aggressors and who were the victims.
>
> We denounce for all time the use of force to achieve political ends and we call upon all the communities of India, to whatever persuasion they may belong, not only to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder, but also to avoid both in speech and writing, any incitement to such acts.

The appeal was signed by Gandhiji in Devanagari, the Persian and Roman scripts; by Jinnah only in English. Gandhiji pressed strongly that since Acharya Kripalani was Congress President, his signature be added to Jinnah's, since Kripalani alone had the authority to speak on behalf of the Congress as Jinnah had in respect of the Muslim League. To exclude the Congress President's signature from the appeal would mean acceptance by implication of Jinnah's contention that Hindus and Muslims

were two nations—Gandhiji being the spokesman of the one as Jinnah claimed to be that of the other. But Jinnah would not yield on that point. Lord Mountbatten had put a straight question to Jinnah whether the issue of a joint peace appeal would put the Muslim League at a "political disadvantage". To this Jinnah had replied in the negative. Mountbatten pleaded with Pandit Nehru that he should not stick out on that point, if only to give him (Mountbatten) an opportunity to test Jinnah's *bona fides*. Pandit Nehru on merits fully agreed with Gandhiji. But in the face of this argument he fell in line with Mountbatten. The following telegrams were exchanged between Gandhiji and the Viceroy in this connection:

Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji 13th April, 1947

> Mr. Jinnah is perfectly ready to sign statement deploring acts of violence etc. which you signed before you left Delhi provided that your and his signatures are the only ones that appear on the document. As you mentioned that you thought Mr. Kripalani's signature might also be added, though I gathered that you did not make this a stipulation, I am not issuing statement until I hear from you. Pandit Nehru is agreeable to leaving matter to my discretion, but I feel I must have your views. Unless statement bears your signature alone Mr. Jinnah will not sign. May I therefore appeal to you to agree.

Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten (Patna) 14th April, 1947

> Am of opinion President Congress should also sign. You should know reason for exclusion President Congress. However I leave final decision you and Panditji.

Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji 15th April, 1947

> I am glad to inform you that Pandit Nehru also agreed to leave the decision to me. I consider it so vital that the appeal should be issued, that I thought it best that it should go out over the signatures only of yourself and Mr. Jinnah.

The net result of Mountbatten's move was to prolong an unnatural situation in which the use of violence continued to pay fabulous dividends to the League. If the appeal had come as a result of a spontaneous effort by the parties concerned, it would have had some chance of being implemented. As it was, it provided the Muslim League with opportunity for yet another manœuvre on the chess board of diplomacy. The comment of *Dawn*, the mouthpiece of the Muslim League, was illuminating:

> There is novelty in the manner of the dramatic appeal which the *leaders of India's two nations have signed*. But there is

> hardly anything in it which the Quaid-i-Azam has not said before without anybody's prompting. . . .
>
> The next step should follow without much delay and in the *logical* sequence. We stress the word "logical" advisedly because the very fact of the Viceroy having *chosen* the Quaid-i-Azam and Mr. Gandhi for the purpose of an appeal of this kind being conveyed to the public is tantamount to *a recognition that two voices and not one must speak in this context. Why is it necessary that two should make such an appeal if it is not recognised that there are two peoples, two nations*, who would respect their own respective leader only?[10] (Italics mine).

And again:

> Mr. Gandhi has been *persuaded* by the Viceroy to denounce violence "for all time" as a means to the attainment of political ends, but the Mahatma's political heir and successor remains still unpursuaded.[11] (Italics mine).

To expect the League to throw away the only "pistol" which Jinnah had claimed they had forged, would have been wishful thinking. But Gandhiji reasoned with himself that even if the Muslim League was not sincere, the joint appeal having been issued at Mountbattan's instance, made by implication the Viceroy party to it and put upon him the burden of its full implementation, which he would not fail to discharge. This implication, the Viceroy has since stated, he did not accept, though he told Gandhiji that he would do everything in his power to help bring about communal peace. Be that as it may, Gandhiji felt this was not enough. But neither then nor with subsequent pleading could he induce the Viceroy to change. The peace appeal, consequently, remained a dead letter and Gandhiji expressed his disappointment over it more than once.

CHAPTER V

THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST

1

THE OLD BONES of Purana Qila (Old Fort) in Delhi, with its rich and varied story stretching far back into the epic age of Indian history, were stirred into new life when the Inter-Asian Relations Conference held its sessions there in the last week of March, 1947. It brought together nearly 250 delegates from 22 countries, representing more than half the population of the world. The Conference symbolised the development of a definite "Asia sentiment", and the keen desire of the people of Asia to take their due share in the affairs of the world that had developed particularly after the war. Pandit Nehru with his "one world" outlook had set his heart on it and was most anxious that Gandhiji should attend it. "We are having a very distinguished and representative gathering . . . from all the countries of Asia," he wrote to Gandhiji in the last week of February. "If you do not come . . . your absence will be keenly felt by all."[1] But Gandhiji was unwilling to be dragged away from his service of the common man in India even for the sake of this Conference. "The last week of March next," he replied, "is at present for me a far cry. If God wills He will find a way for me to attend the Conference."[2] It was Lord Mountbatten's invitation to meet him which ultimately brought Gandhiji to Delhi and enabled him to participate in the two concluding sessions of the Conference.

It was a unique gathering of its kind, "a great event for all of us who belong to Asia," as Gandhiji put it. Almost all countries of Asia from the west, the east and the south, including the Arab countries, Tibet and Mongolia, and the countries of South-East Asia as well as the Asian Republics of the Soviet Union were represented in it. Various European and American Governments took great interest and sent their observers to attend the Conference. To everybody's disappointment, Japan was not represented as, under the occupation, the Japanese were not allowed to leave their country for such purposes. Conspicuous by its absence was also the Muslim League organisation. It could not help betraying the green eye even in a matter of all-Asia concern. One would have thought that this at least would be regarded as common ground by all groups and sections. But, instead, it dubbed the Conference as a "thinly disguised attempt on the part of

the Hindu Congress to boost itself politically as the prospective leader of the Asian people" and regretted that "a number of organisations in Muslim countries should have been beguiled . . . to participate in this Conference!"[3] And this in spite of the fact that the Conference was held not at the invitation of the Congress, nor even under the official auspices of the Governments of any of the countries concerned, but on a wholly unofficial basis. Its sole object was to bring together the leading men and women from various Asian countries on a common platform to foster mutual contacts and focus attention on their social, economic and cultural problems. The Indian Council of World Affairs, under whose auspices the Conference was held, was a non-political organisation. Political problems, particularly of a controversial nature or relating to the internal affairs of any country, were deliberately excluded from the agenda of the Conference. At the very outset it was made clear that the Conference would adopt no formal resolution or address any recommendations to anybody, lest it should jeopardise the status of the Council of World Affairs as a non-partisan body.

The *pandal* was packed to capacity long before Gandhiji's arrival. The number of delegates and visitors, nearly ten thousand, swelled to double that figure towards the close. The whole gathering stood up as a mark of respect when, escorted by Pandit Nehru, Gandhiji entered and again when he left on the first day. The dais was tastefully decorated. A large map of Asia stood at the back, showing the capitals, population, air routes, natural resources, flags and coats of arms of various countries. Before dispersing, the Conference resolved to form an Asian Relations Organisation. Pandit Nehru was unanimously elected President of its Provisional General Council.

"I would not like to live in this world if it is not to be one world. I would certainly like to see that dream realised in my life time," Gandhiji declared amidst prolonged and repeated applause in reply to a question by the delegate from Azarbaizan whether he believed in the ideal of "one world", and whether it could succeed under present day conditions. He urged the representatives who had come from various Asian countries to strive their level best to realise the ideal of "one world". "If you work with a fixed determination, there is no doubt that in our own generation we will realise this dream."

What had brought together the Asian representatives? —he asked. Was it in order to wage war or to take revenge upon Europe that had exploited them in the past or upon America or upon other non-Asiatics? "I say most emphatically 'no'. This is not India's mission. It would be a sorry thing if India, having won her independence essentially or rather predominantly through non-violent means, used that independence for the suppression of other parts of the world."

Being asked by Dr. Han Liwu, the delegate from China, who

addressed him as "the spirit of India", "the light of Asia", and "a great man of the world", to say a few words, Gandhiji suggested that the Conference should meet yearly or once in two or three years. "If you ask me where, I would say India is the place. You will forgive me for my partiality for India."

His own words, however, set him painfully thinking. What message had an India torn by fratricidal strife to offer them? What impression would they carry back with them of their visit? What followed was a piece of candid self-introspection: "We do not know how to keep peace among ourselves. We think we must resort to the law of the jungle. It is not an experience which I would like you to carry to your respective countries. I would instead like you to bury it here. India is on the eve of independence. We want to be our own masters. But how shall we be our own masters? I do not know; I am sure Pandit Nehru does not know; I am sure Khan Saheb (Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan) does not know. All that we know is that one should do one's duty and leave the results in the hands of God. Man is supposed to be the master of his own destiny, but it is only partly true. He can make his own destiny only in so far as he is allowed by the Great Power which overrides all our intentions, all our plans and carries out His own plans. I call that Power not by the name of Allah, Khuda or God but truth. The whole truth is embodied only within the heart of that Great Power—Truth. Truth is unapproachable, something that we cannot reach. A great Englishman taught me to believe that God is unknowable. He is knowable only to the extent that our limited intellect allows. You, gentlemen from different parts of Asia, having come here and met together, should carry away sweet memories of the meeting and make an effort to build that great edifice of Truth."

The delegate from Iran was on his feet, when Gandhiji arrived the next day. Sarojini Naidu had left her sick-bed to preside over the Conference. She requested the speaker to pause for a while as she wished "Mahatma Gandhi also to hear his sonorous Persian." Following Dr. Sjahrir, the Premier of the Indonesian Republic, Gandhiji addressed the delegates: "You, friends, have not seen real India, and you are not meeting in Conference in the midst of real India. The big cities are not the real India. The carnage which you see going on in various parts of India is certainly a shameful thing. But you are greatly mistaken and you will only mislead others if you go away with the impression that you have seen real India when you have visited a few big cities of India. If you really want to see India, it is to be found not in her dozen or so big cities but in the seven hundred thousand villages where dwell thirty-eight crores of India's population — miserable specimens of humanity with lustreless eyes."

He recalled a French story, which a friend had translated for him into English, when he was in South Africa. Three French scientists once set out in search of truth. One of them found his way to India. He went to the so-called cities of that day, saw the so-called high caste people but to no purpose. Finally he found in the humble cottage of an "untouchable" in a humble village the truth he was in search of.

> You will not be fascinated by the sight. But they (the villages) are India. You will have to scratch below the dung-heap. In the midst of these dung-heaps are to be found the humble *Bhangis* in whom you find the concentrated essence of wisdom. . . . Wisdom came to the West from the East. Zoroaster, first of the wise men, belonged to the East. He was followed by Buddha. He belonged to the East, to India. Moses belonged to Palestine. Then came Jesus. After Jesus came Mohammad. I do not know a single person to match these men of Asia. And then what happened? Christianity became disfigured when it went to the West.

But before Asia could deliver a message to the world, they had themselves to understand what that message was. That message, the message of the East, the message of Asia was not to be learnt by seeing through European spectacles. "If you want to give a message to the West, it must be the message of love and truth. I want you to go away with the thought that Asia has to conquer the West through love and truth."

> In this age of democracy, in this age of the awakening of the poorest of the poor, you can re-deliver that message with the greatest emphasis. You will complete the conquest of the West not through vengeance, because you have been exploited, but through love. I am sanguine, if all of you put your hearts together—not merely your heads—to understand the secret of the message that these wise men of the East have left us, and if we really become worthy of that great message, the conquest of the West will be complete and that conquest will be loved by the West itself.
>
> The West today is pining for wisdom. It is despairing of the multiplication of atom bombs, because the multiplication of atom bombs means utter destruction not merely of the West but of the whole world; as if the prophecy of the Bible is going to be fulfilled and there is to be, heaven forbid, a deluge. It is up to you to deliver the whole world, not merely Asia, from that sin. That is the precious heritage your teachers and my teachers have left us.

An ounce of action was more than a ton of speculation to Gandhiji. What filled his mind as he left the meeting? Not the tremendous ovation he received, not the surge of new hope in the Asian delegates' heart, not even the alluring prospect of an Asia re-awakened and vibrant after the torpor of centuries, re-delivering to an expectant world the message of the hoary wisdom of the East—perennial, timeless, and ever fresh—and its rich cultural tradition, but how far his own people truly represented that culture and tradition. "Did you notice," he remarked to one of his companions as he came out of the *pandal*, "that while the delegates from other countries were befittingly dressed in simple style, reflecting the respective cultures of their countries, our own visitors and the lady volunteers on duty, attired in silk and wearing lip-stick and rouge in the western style, presented a very incongruous picture? I feel humiliated. How my heart would have danced with joy if they were seen there in the Congress women-volunteers' simple Khadi uniform."

2

Gandhiji returned from the penultimate session of the Asian Conference in time for the evening prayer meeting. The news of the horrible happenings in the Punjab had highly inflamed public feelings. Already refugees from Rawalpindi and elsewhere had begun to arrive in their thousands and the stories they brought with them served further to inflame hearts. Hardly had the recitation from the Koran commenced when up rose a Hindu Mahasabha youth and shouted: "This is a Hindu temple. We won't let you recite Muslim prayer here." Some people began forcibly to eject the interrupter from the meeting but Gandhiji intervened. "I shall not proceed with the prayer so long as there is a single person objecting. I want to insure the fullest freedom to the dissenting minority." The young man tried to work his way up to the rostrum. But others prevented him. Gandhiji moved halfway down to meet him saying, "Let no-one come between me and this young man." The crowd became irritated and the objector was hustled out of the meeting. In deep sorrow Gandhiji said to the gathering: "This young man was in anger. Anger is short madness. But it should be up to you and me to meet madness not with madness but with sanity. I am coming from Bihar. I have seen with my own eyes what people can do when they are seized by madness. It has bent my head with shame."

The next day, before the prayer commenced, Gandhiji asked the gathering if there was any objector. Up sprang a young man and repeated the previous day's objection: "It is a Hindu temple . . . ."

Gandhiji: "The temple belongs to *Bhangis.* Only the trustees of the temple have a right to object. But they have not objected."

The young man: "It is a public place of worship. You must go elsewhere if you want to read from the Koran."

Gandhiji: "With utmost humility I repeat that I, a practising *Bhangi,* have more right to speak on behalf of the *Bhangis* than you, who have probably never cleaned a latrine in your life, nor are even now prepared to do it."

The gathering shouted: "We want the prayer to continue. What right has one individual to hold it up against the wishes of all the rest? Proceed, please."

Gandhiji appealed to the young man: "Thousands want the prayer to be held. If you persist, they will be sorely disappointed. Does it behove you?"

The young man sat down. But another rose in his place breathing fire: "Why don't you go and recite the Gita verses in a mosque?"

Gandhiji: "You need not become excited. You are doing no good to Hinduism by your unreasoning fanaticism, but only encompassing its ruin. Hinduism is the acme of toleration and broadmindedness. Here is Badshah Khan, a man of God every inch of him if you want to see one in the flesh. Have you no respect even for him? But, as I have already said, even if a child objects, I shall not proceed with the prayer."

"Why don't you go to the Punjab?"

(*Renewed clamour from the gathering and voices.*)

"You get out. We want the prayer to be held."

Some people in their impatience threatened to manhandle the interrupter. Gandhiji appealed to them to desist.

"I want five minutes," the interrupter shouted.

Gandhiji: "You can indicate your wish by a simple 'yes' or 'no' and I shall obey."

The young man: "You cannot have Muslim prayer here."

Gandhiji: "All right. . . . Let everyone keep calm and quiet. Tomorrow I shall again put this question and it will be open even to little child by simply saying 'no' to prevent me from holding the prayer." With that he left the prayer ground and prayed privately inside his room, only the members of his party in attendance. Pandit Nehru entered the room while the prayer was in progress. Quietly he took his seat among the congregation unnoticed.

On the third day, as Gandhiji was proceeding to the prayer ground, a letter was put into his hands purporting to be from the President of the Sweepers' Union. It was to the effect that they did not wish him to stay in the Bhangi Colony. On inquiry it proved to be a hoax. "What a cruel joke upon an old man like myself!" Gandhiji sadly remarked to the gathering. "They tell me that they will let me

hold the prayer meeting provided I do not recite verses from the Koran. Am I not free even to pray as I feel?" He then explained to them that if an overwhelming majority had threatened obstruction, he would have certainly braved their wrath and held the prayer meeting. "But I find that the objectors are only a handful. If I hold the prayer by bearing them down by our superior numbers, it will not be a triumph of devotion but of the devil. The end of prayer is to establish peace in the hearts of men, not to suppress or overwhelm the minority." He then asked if there were any objectors in the gathering. In reply three persons stood up.

Gandhiji: "I bow to the opposition. There will be no prayer."

As he rose to go, there was again clamour from the gathering, asking him to hold the prayer.

Gandhiji: "Not today. The number of objectors has increased. That is good. But I cannot afford the luxury of martyrdom today. I have other important business to attend to."

"In Noakhali, they never prevented me from chanting Ramadhun," he sadly added. "Those who had objection left the meeting. . . . Now let not the police harass the objectors."

Thus, everyday provided a fresh test of Ahimsa. On the fourth day, he woke up with the thought: "Why does the opposition at the evening prayer still persist?" He told Manu that his striving for non-violence and truth could be nullified not only by a mistake on his part, but even by flaws in his colleagues. Since she was conducting the prayer meetings, it was for her to ask herself whether the verses she uttered came from the fulness of her faith. The fanatical opposition at the prayer meetings must cease if her prayer came straight from her heart. If her prayer satisfied the implications of full faith, then why was it that she suffered from frequent nose-bleeding? She must strive further to make her faith conform to reality, and an outward test of that would be that her nose-bleeding should stop forthwith! He seemed to be very much weighed down by care. After a talk with the Maulana Saheb, he sadly remarked: "It seems God will not let me live for long."

His penance bore fruit at last. A leader of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh came to him that evening and assured him that there would be no more interruption at his prayer meetings. But when he again asked at the prayer meeting if there were any objectors, a youngster raised his hand. Before he could say anything, up sprang another young man — a member of the Hindu Mahasabha. He began to plead with the gathering: "Mahatmaji has told us that even if a child objects, he won't proceed with his prayer meeting. . . . It is a shame that for the last three days he has not been able to hold his prayer meeting owing to our ill-mannered obstruction. I earnestly beseech you not to obstruct any more. Even if we must

disagree, there are numerous ways of showing our disagreement in a becoming manner."

When he had finished, Gandhiji again asked, "If there is any objector, he can still exercise his veto." Pin-drop silence followed. The first objector sat down. But another rose.

Gandhiji: "All right. I own defeat. But it is no defeat of the gathering. Their defeat will be only when they indulge in anger, abuse or violence against you."

The Hindu Mahasabha friend again got up and reasoned with the objector. The latter melted: "I withdraw my opposition, you can proceed with the prayer."

The prayer was thus held on the fourth day. "Let no-one imagine," observed Gandhiji in his after prayer discourse, "that we have had no prayer for the last three days. We did not pray with the lips but we prayed with our hearts, which is by far the more effective part of prayer. In this those who have opposed, have also helped, though unconsciously. Their opposition has helped me to turn the search-light inward as never before. You might be tempted to ask what I mean by giving so much of my time and energy to such trifles, when negotiations are in progress with Lord Mountbatten on which hangs the fate of the nation. Let me tell you, for me there is no big, no small. They are all of equal importance. *In Noakhali, in Bihar, in Punjab, in Delhi, even in this prayer ground the battle of undivided India is being lost and won daily.* The experience here today has provided me with the key to success elsewhere."

Thereafter the prayer meetings were held without any disturbance. The congregation on the 4th and 5th April was estimated to have exceeded one hundred thousand.

3

Gandhiji's bare little room during his stay at Bhangi Colony became a place of pilgrimage for all and sundry. Many who could not have his *darshan* or touch his feet were happy, in his absence, to bow before the mattress on which he used to sit. One day two very old refugee women from the Punjab came—one a Hindu, the other a Muslim. They had been neighbours and very close friends ever since their marriage. Their husbands, too, were like blood brothers to each other. When the trouble broke out, the Hindu woman had to flee for her life with her two grandchildren. Her son and daughter-in-law could not be traced. The Muslim sister had no issue and regarded the Hindu woman's children as her own. When the latter fled home, she decided to accompany her. Both were staying in a refugee camp. They wanted Gandhiji's *darshan* but were told that this they

could have only at prayer time. "But, my dear child, we want to touch his feet. We want the Mahatma to bless our grandchildren," they sobbed. "Show us where the Mahatma sits." Reverentially they knelt before his mattress and came away feeling blessed. When Gandhiji returned from his visit to the Viceroy, they were waiting for him. They took both his hands in theirs and for benediction placed them upon the heads of their "joint" grandchildren — a boy and a girl of seven and four respectively. Gandhiji was deeply moved to find in these humble folk an embodiment of his ideal of true Hindu-Muslim unity, the realisation of which had become the master passion of his soul.

A group of refugees from Rawalpindi came another day. The story of their sufferings they narrated was heart-rending. Out of about one thousand, only sixteen had escaped and that too by hiding. "Now, tell us, apostle of non-violence, how are we to exist at all? You tell people to discard arms, but in the Punjab the Muslims kill the Hindus at sight. You have no time even to go to the Punjab. Do you want us to be butchered like sheep? If one is to die, one should at least sell one's life dearly."

Gandhiji: "If all the Punjabis were to die to the last man without killing, the Punjab would become immortal. But you take up arms and when you are worsted you come to me. Of what help can I be to you in the circumstance? If you cared to listen to me, I could restore calm in the Punjab even from here. One thousand lost their lives of course, but it was not like brave men. The more is the pity. What a difference it would have made if they had bravely offered themselves as a non-violent, willing sacrifice. Oppose with Ahimsa if you can but go down fighting by all means if you have not the non-violence of the brave. Do not turn cowards."

* * *

Before returning to their homes, some foreign delegates and visitors to the Asian Conference came to take leave of him. Some of them brought gifts. The Tibetan delegate presented him with a rich carpet, images of Lord Buddha and silks. Accompanying the visitors were also several little Japanese girls. One of them had a brain-wave. Why should not she also present something to the Mahatma? She retired into a corner of the room, quickly made a lovely embroidered purse out of her handkerchief and laid it before Gandhiji. "What shall I do with it? I have not a pie to put into it," exclaimed Gandhiji. Disappointment was writ large on the child's innocent face as the remark was explained to her in Japanese by an interpreter. But perseveringly she went round and collected one hundred rupees from her friends, slipped the money into the purse and returned triumphantly with it in her hand. Gandhiji accepted the gift with a merry laugh saying: "My little friend, this money shall be used

for the benefit of little girls like you in this country." The Chinese children presented two pieces of hand-spun and hand-woven silk for his *dhoti* (loin cloth) and were edified to receive from him a portion of his lunch — wheaten wafers, raisins and brown sugar! The Burmese children brought a small casket and a ring. Another little child came with a miniature spinning-wheel with the Mahatma himself turning it. Putting it into his hands she trilled: "Here's the Father of the Nation spinning!"

On the evening of 4th April, Pandit Nehru brought the delegates from Egypt to meet Gandhiji. One of them asked the question: "If the British quit, would you still provide them with military facilities in India? And would India adhere to your policy of non-violence after you attain independence?" And finally: "Would you welcome American aid for winning India's independence?" With regard to the first, Gandhiji replied, he could, in certain circumstances, contemplate the possibility of Britain approaching independent India with that request, as a friendly concession vital to her (Britain's) existence. He hoped that in that event India would consider the request on its merits, uninfluenced by the memory of past wrongs. As to American military aid for the attainment of Indian independence, he was adamant: "I can never think of seeking foreign aid for the attainment of independence. I do not know what the national policy of India after independence will be. But I have faith that a day will come when the world will come to India in search of peace and India and Asia will become the light of the world. I do not know whether I shall survive the conflagration that threatens to engulf us, to witness it, but you who are all young men will live to see it." The delegates laughed at the reference to them as "young men".

Some European visitors accompanied by Dr. Sjahrir came the next day. One of them asked Gandhiji a question about his conception of free India's economic policy. "I hope," replied Gandhiji, "we shall never want to get rich by exploitation of others, having passed through that experience ourselves. For instance, we might export our textile manufactures to help a neighbouring country that was suffering from a cloth shortage as a friendly act, but not to exploit industrially backward people." And that was his message to the industrially advanced countries of the West, too: "How I wish, Western powers learnt to look upon India not as a country to be exploited but as a country whose independence they should respect because it has been won without the power of armaments. If we lacked the technical know-how, they could provide it to us in a spirit of mutual help, not at a fabulous price. . . . Christianity that came to India from the West was a mixed affair. If only Christian missions came to render humanitarian service to the poor village folk, without the proselytising

motive, they would earn their undying gratitude and prove themselves true heirs and representatives of Jesus Christ."

The visitors were deeply moved: "We feel blessed to have met you. You seem to us to move out of the pages of the New Testament to represent to us the way shown by Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. What you have said about truth and non-violence has touched us deeply. Equally true is what you have said about our callous indifference towards your country. We shall carry with us the wonderful experience of our meeting with you and convey to our countrymen your message. We realise that it is the alien rule which is responsible for the inhuman orgy into which your country has been plunged and which has caused your saintly self and your political heir, Pandit Nehru, such grief. We pray for your health and long life."

It was touching to see the deep reverence with which the foreign delegates came to him, when so many of his own countrymen had completely lost their heads. He had an appropriate word for each visitor. He asked the Tibetans to revive the immortal message of the Buddha. He sympathised with the Arabs but asked them to treat the Jews with love and understanding. To the Jews his advice was to abjure terrorist methods. He sympathised with their aspirations for a national home, but if it was a spiritual ideal, as they claimed it to be, it had to be realised by cultivating the goodwill and friendship of the Arabs, not through the intervention of imperialist powers. Upon the Indonesian and the Viet-Namese, he impressed that whatever was gained by the sword was likely to perish by the sword. Nothing permanent could be built on force.

"He is unlike anyone else we have ever met," remarked one delegate. "Our visit to India would have been incomplete if we had not had the privilege of meeting him," said another. "You are fortunate to have such a leader," remarked a lady visitor. "We might not have had to kill if we had one like him to lead us."

4

The National Week commenced on the 6th April. It was on this day in 1919 that Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act was launched by observing the day as a day of fasting and prayer throughout India. The spontaneous mass upsurge it evoked was a soul-stirring spectacle, signalising the awakening of India. The common man had discovered himself and the latent power of non-violence. A week after came the Jallianwalla Bag massacre. The innocent blood of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs flowed together. It marked the beginning of India's non-violent fight for freedom. In commemoration of these events Gandhiji had instituted the practice of observing the

days between the 6th and 13th April as the National Week. This was done by fasting and prayer both on the opening and the closing day and by devoting the week to an intensive programme of constructive activity. This included corporate scavenging, service of the untouchables, communal unity and mass spinning. Referring to it in the course of his post-prayer speech on the 5th April, Gandhiji repeated that the spinning-wheel with all that it stood for was the only royal road to the deliverance of the country as well as to the realisation of peace in the heart. He described how it had brought spiritual solace to several friends, when every other resource had failed them. He prophesied that if they continued to fight amongst themselves, the golden apple of independence would slip from their hands. If Pakistan meant a land only for the Muslims, it would be a land flowing with poison. The India of his dreams was a land watered by rivers of love. He claimed that he knew the secret of the alchemy that could turn even poison into nectar. But for that he needed their cooperation.

The day also happened to be the death anniversary of Charles Andrews. Gandhiji ended by paying an affectionate tribute to the memory of that friend of India and servant of humanity "who was an Indian at heart, at the same time a true Englishman."

Khwaja Saheb Abdul Majid, a nationalist Muslim leader and a very old friend of Gandhiji, came to see him during the National Week. He was most unhappy at the prospect of the division of India but tried to laugh away his grief. "Bapuji is now going to drive us out of India in our old age," he remarked to a member of Gandhiji's party, affecting a laugh. "When India is divided, I shall come to take asylum with you. You won't let the Hindus murder me," he added playfully. Gandhiji, overhearing the remark, interjected: "If a fanatic should kill you, I shall dance with joy! My misfortune is that I have not many like you who would die bravely and without anger. If I had even half-a-dozen like you, the flames that threaten to devour us would be put out and peace would reign in India in no time." Little did he then know that nine months later this very Muslim friend would recite the *Fateha* (Muslim funeral prayer) over *his* body, as riddled by a fanatic's bullets it lay lifeless.

At the evening prayer meeting he paid an affectionate tribute to Khwaja Saheb, referring to him as "a fakir at heart though well-placed in life, a Khadi lover and a votary of non-violence, who would not utter a word of anger but die with the name of Allah on his lips, if someone came to take his life." He recalled how it was at his house that he had stopped during the great non-cooperation movement when he visited Aligarh in the twenties. A Swamiji, who then accompanied him (Gandhiji) had not yet shed his scruples about taking food from a Muslim hand. Instead of resenting it, with the utmost spontaneity and goodwill, Khwaja Saheb

engaged a Brahmin cook for him. How could anyone hate or condemn the entire Muslim community when it had given to India sons like Badshah Khan and Khwaja Abdul Majid?

As the madness spread and large masses of Muslims misled by the Muslim League's propaganda became, for the time being, alienated from him, he grappled to his soul with hoops of steel, the few old-timer Muslim colleagues of the glorious Khilafat and non-cooperation days who still remained with him. They symbolised to him the whole of the Muslim community, the best that is in Islam, and true national unity, as he envisaged it in free India. He told the gathering that if they could only learn from Badshah Khan and Khwaja Abdul Majid the art of dying at the hands of the enemy with a smile on their lips instead of a curse, they would be reborn, and out of the conflagration that threatened to consume the country would emerge the India of their dreams.

* * *

The summer of 1947 in Delhi was the hottest within the memory even of the oldest residents. A scorching wind blew for the greater part of the day. Gandhiji had to sit with a wet towel wrapped round his head (his air-conditioning!). But, it was not the hot weather that told upon him as much as the fire of communal strife. The fire that raged within him at the turn events were taking seared his soul.

To all outward appearance he was serene as ever, engaged in ceaseless activity, but his mind was all the time seeking an answer to the question of questions that filled his soul: How could the spreading conflagration of communal hatred be brought under control by non-violence? One of the letters that his mail-bag brought bore the address "Mohammad Gandhi". In another he was called a "communalist", and in still another "Jinnah's slave". This only amused him. "It is the people who conferred upon me the title of Mahatma, these epithets, too, are a gift from them; they are equally welcome."

Referring to these letters in one of his prayer discourses he observed: "I believe in the message of truth delivered by all the religious teachers of the world. And it is my constant prayer that I may never have a feeling of anger against my traducers, that even if I fall a victim to an assassin's bullet, I may deliver up my soul with the remembrance of God upon my lips. I shall be content to be written down an impostor if my lips utter a word of anger or abuse against my assailant at the last moment. The world today is full of such impostors. Only my death will determine whether I am Mohammad Gandhi, Jinnah's slave, the destroyer of Hindu religion or its true servant and protector. Let us cease to think in terms of revenge and retaliation. Revenge and retaliation belong only to God, the omnipotent. Let us not deny Him and usurp His place. Shall we by our

internecine violence destroy one another in a land which is defended by the immortal Himalayas and watered by the sacred and life-giving Ganga and the Jumna? My heart prayer is that God may not keep me alive to witness such a tragedy or the shame of asking for the help of the British army for our protection."

* * *

In one of his lectures on war Ruskin—addressing the women in the gathering as "wives and maidens, who are the soul of soldiers" and "mothers, who have devoted your children to the great hierarchy of war"—once remarked that he could not understand their being so prone to wartime hysteria when they stood to lose more than anyone else in the holocaust. He would fain have joined, he observed, in the "cadence of hammer-strokes that should beat swords into ploughshares." That this could not be was not the fault of "us men" but wholly theirs. "The real, final, reason for all the poverty, misery, and rage of battles, throughout Europe, is simply that you women, however good, however religious, however self-sacrificing for those whom you love, are too selfish and too thoughtless to take pains for any creature out of your own immediate circles." He wound up his remarks with the following pregnant utterance:

> You know, or at least you might know if you would think, that every battle you hear of has made many widows and orphans. You have, none of us, heart enough truly to mourn with these. But at least we might put on the outer symbols of mourning with them. Let . . . every Christian lady who had conscience towards God, vow that she will mourn, at least outwardly, for His killed creatures. . . . Let every lady in the upper classes of civilised Europe simply vow that, while any cruel war proceeds, she will wear *black*—a mute's black—with no jewel, no ornament, no excuse for, or evasion into, prettiness. I tell you . . . no war would last a week.

Gandhiji, who shared a great many things with Ruskin, went a step further. He suggested to the women in his Ashram that to take themselves out of the narrow circle of their exclusive domestic cares and interests, which was at the root of their servitude and subjection, and develop a wider, social outlook, they should pull down the walls, abolish their separate family kitchens and jointly take charge of the common mess and run it for the whole Ashram. As a natural corollary to it, they should, further, take children from other homes into their own, putting theirs under others' care. He averred that if only women shed their restricted outlook, which tended to make their own little family their universe, if they transmuted "mutual lust" into a higher purposive awareness and realised, in the broader context

of their social responsibilities, the power that was non-violence when practised consciously and with knowledge, they would become what nature had intended them to be—instruments for the establishment of the reign of justice and peace on earth.

In the course of a talk with an American woman, he remarked: "It is for American women to show what power women can be in the world. But that can only be when you cease to be the toys of men's idle hours. You have got freedom. You can become a power for peace by refusing to be carried away by the flood-tide of pseudo-science glorifying self-indulgence that is engulfing the West today and apply your minds instead to the science of non-violence; for forgiveness is your nature. By aping men, you neither become men nor can you function as your real selves and develop your special talent that God has given you. God has vouchsafed to women the power of non-violence more than to man. It is all the more effective because it is mute. Women are the natural messengers of the gospel of non-violence if only they will realise their high estate."

Gandhiji's fair visitor was deeply moved: "If there is one person in the world who can point the way of deliverance to womankind," she remarked, "it is you. It is our great good luck that you combine with a burning passion for the cause a knowledge of the way. We realise that what you have told us today alone is the answer to the challenge of the atom bomb. We shall always bear your message in our hearts."

"Why do you not visit our country?" She asked as she rose to go.

"How can I, when my own house is on fire? But, if you will come here and, by your non-violence, stop the spreading conflagration I shall be but too glad to visit your country when India is free."

Such was the reverence in which most of the visitors from abroad held him that many of them would not occupy a chair when he offered them one but insisted on squatting on the floor in the Indian style even though they were not accustomed to it. Some of them walked backward when leaving the room, so as not to turn their back upon him.

A party of women workers asked Gandhiji a couple of days later: Should women workers work among women alone or should they work among men also? Gandhiji replied that while he did not believe in artificial segregation of men and women in any sphere, it was clear to him that considering the great paucity of women workers with requisite qualifications and the vast deal of work that needed to be done among the women owing to men's neglect of them in the past, every available woman worker would be needed exclusively for the service of women for a long time to come. He did not wish the women to imitate men or to enter into rivalry with them. Women and men were in every respect equal but different; they were meant to supplement and to complement one another. Their conduct towards one another should be

natural and free but at the same time disciplined and well regulated.

They asked to know his views on village self-government. Gandhiji told them that the key to it was non-violence, particularly in its constructive aspects. "Today numerous constructive workers, who used to swear by non-violence, seem to be playing at it. But even if all of them were to renounce truth, Ahimsa, Khadi, village industries and such other constructive activities, I shall proclaim my faith in them, even if I am alone. For I see no salvation for the Indian masses otherwise. In spite of all the marvellous progress that technology has made, I dare say that nothing can compare with non-violence in its potency. India may after all go the way of armaments. But it is my firm conviction that if the men and women of India cultivate in themselves the courage to face death bravely and non-violently, they can laugh to scorn the power of armaments and realise the ideal of unadulterated independence in terms of the masses which would serve as an example to the world. In that women can take the lead for they are a personification of the power of self-suffering."

* * *

A well-informed and highly placed friend had written to Gandhiji that he should beware of the British officials and British commercial interests: they still continued to be of the old way of thinking. The new Viceroy had left no doubt as to his intentions. But there was widespread fear that his intentions might be sabotaged by forces that had so often before successfully defeated British aims. It was no idle fear either. Lord Mountbatten had himself felt constrained to bring home to the higher British officials and the permanent services the urgency that actuated British plans and intentions.

"People's minds are perturbed," remarked Gandhiji on the evening of the 10th April, giving expression to the apprehensions that filled India's soul between the dawn of independence and its sunrise.

> They ask me whether Lord Mountbatten would be able to deliver the goods or whether he would be forced to eat his words in the face of the organised non-cooperation of the various well-entrenched British elements in India. Anything is possible in the prevailing circumstances. The dawn of freedom has appeared but we do not feel the glow of its sunrise. We do not know whether what we see is true dawn or false. We are trembling between hope and fear. Our hearts are filled with doubt. So far the British officials and commercial interests have ridden on our backs. Let me tell them, it is now high time that they made up their minds to get off our backs. The Viceroy has declared that the British have finally decided to withdraw from India by the 30th June next year, and his declaration is backed by the full authority of the British Parliament. Churchill and his party seem

determined not to give in without a fight. But fight or no fight, the British power has got to go. I have sounded this note of warning so that if there are any elements again heading for the wrong path, they may pause, reflect and desist.

I am further told that the British officials and the commercial community are behind the present communal trouble. Lord Mountbatten has become apprehensive lest what is being alleged against them may after all be true. It is up to the British elements in India to dispel his doubts.

The success of Lord Mountbatten's mission is bound up with the loyal cooperation of the British commercial interests, the British army and the British civilians in India. If what is being said about them is true, it is a tragedy and they are not being loyal either to the people of India or their own. I appeal to them to help the Viceroy in the peaceful transfer of power. I hope the Britishers will leave India not as enemies but as friends.

To his own people his advice was that they should beware of traps that were being laid for them and not fall into them, nor lose hope or faith in themselves, but lean upon God only and their own inner strength.

5

Gandhiji's mind now reverted to Bihar. If he could set Bihar right, all the rest would come right. "I am here but my heart is in Bihar," he said to Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Dr. Rajendra Prasad felt that perhaps he could now return to Bihar without any detriment to the work in Delhi.

At midday, he learnt that Dr. Rajendra Prasad had developed high temperature. Immediately on receiving the news, he decided to pay him an unannounced visit. The members of the Food Minister's household were taken by surprise, not the least surprised being the Food Minister himself. Commending the patient to the care of his gentle wife, he asked her to exercise a little more of "home rule" over her husband, who insisted on over-working himself! "Has not your good man, in spite of his Bihari meekness, often lorded it over you?" he laughingly asked. "Well then, it is time he got back at least some of it!" The whole room rang with laughter at the home-thrust, and in five seconds the patient and the entire family had a more bracing dose of tonic than the medicines of all the doctors put together.

Having ministered to the ailing colleague, Gandhiji hurried back to the endless duties awaiting him at his residence. The daughter of a friend wished to accompany him to Bihar. In spite of her aristocratic

upbringing she had volunteered to serve him as a member of his improvised staff. She had impressed everybody by her diligence and conscientious devotion to duty. But Gandhiji never encouraged people to venture beyond their capacity. He gently reminded her that to walk with him was to walk on the edge of a sharp razor. "Those who are in my company must be ready to sleep upon the bare floor, wear coarse clothes, get up at an unearthly hour, subsist on uninviting, simple food, even to clean the latrines. If you want to qualify yourself for all this, come with me, when I go to the Ashram. In the meantime you should be content to serve me whenever I am in Delhi."

In the course of a conversation with two friends from South Africa, Dr. Naidu and Naicker, Gandhiji remarked: "India is now on the threshold of independence. But this is not the independence I wanted. To my mind it will be no independence if India is partitioned and the minorities do not enjoy security, protection and equal treatment in the two parts. . . . If what is today happening is an earnest of things to come after independence, it bodes no good for the future. I, therefore, feel ill at ease. But I am content to leave the future in God's good hands."

Announcing the news of his departure for Bihar at the evening prayer, he remarked: "People ask me why I do not go to the Punjab. What more shall I do by going to the Punjab?—I ask myself. Today the Sikhs say that they would resist Pakistan by force. What they should say is that they would die to the last man but not yield to force. It should not be necessary for me to go to the Punjab to explain this simple thing. It was in answer to the inner voice that I went to Noakhali. The same voice took me to Bihar. If I can realise my non-violence in Bihar and Noakhali, so that even though fire may rage all over India, Bihar and Noakhali will remain unaffected, it will transform the whole scene. My voice will then reach the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs of the Punjab and wean them from madness even though I may not be able physically to be in their midst. On the contrary, running from pillar to post will lead to nowhere. In the same way, it will be sheer conceit on my part to think that my presence alone can control the course of political events in Delhi. I shall be failing in my duty elsewhere by continuing to stay in Delhi in that vain endeavour or hope." He went on to say:

> The Gita teaches us that we must be content faithfully to discharge within the field assigned to us whatever duty may naturally fall to our lot. Bihar and Noakhali are my natural fields of service today. If leaving my duty there I allowed myself to be lured by work elsewhere, no matter how much more attractive, it would be dangerous. On the other hand, by remaining where my natural duty requires me, I shall be able to serve Delhi and Punjab as well.

No matter where I am, I shall be hammering at the same thing, namely, that Truth and Ahimsa are the only way. If the ideal of dying without killing and without harbouring anger or ill-will could be realised anywhere in India, I am sure it would solve all our problems and bring India deliverance. Let us do our part; let us not sow dragon's teeth for ourselves. If our record is clean, the world's judgment will overtake Pakistan and Pakistan will topple under the weight of its own iniquity. A Satyagrahi conquers the whole world by his love. Satyagraha is self-acting; it needs no props.

After the prayer meeting, a gentleman from Madras approached him for an autograph in Tamil. Gandhiji had learnt some Tamil in South Africa years ago. He agreed to make the attempt. He must, however, charge double his usual autograph fee! With some effort he succeeded. "Now if it is without a mistake, you will pay an additional ten rupees, won't you?" he asked. The gentleman protested that he had no more cash on him. Gandhiji said to him coaxingly: "Then let it stand over till tomorrow; I shall trust you." The friend took off a gold ring from his finger and offered it to him instead. Just then Pandit Nehru arrived: "So you are at your old game again! I was told that Tamil Chetties were the shrewdest businessmen in the world, but. . . . " The Chetty friend interposed: "But, Sir, no-one can beat Mahatmaji in the art of emptying people's pockets. I confess myself beaten."

"No, on the contrary, it is you who have struck a shrewd bargain," retorted Gandhiji. "You are carrying with you the priceless blessings of the poor."

"Your blessings are more than enough for me, Mahatmaji; I need no other," the friend remarked as he bowed and touched his feet.

Badshah Khan was feeling very sad and heavy at heart. He and his Khudai Khidmatgar organisation had cast their lot with the Congress ever since the commencement of India's non-violent struggle for freedom. They had burnt their boats. And now it seemed as if they would no more belong to India. Nor owing to their ideological difference with the Muslim League would they have any place in Pakistan. "We shall be out-casts in the eyes of both," he sadly remarked. "But I do not worry so long as Mahatmaji is there," he added. Such was his unshakable faith in Gandhiji. He was unwell but was disinclined to take any medicine. He yielded only when Gandhiji told him that to serve the country he must become well first. On the last day of Gandhiji's stay at Delhi he had fever. But he insisted upon pressing Gandhiji's limbs at night as before. Gandhiji tried to dissuade him. He answered: "It is the last day, so let me. It will make me well." Gandhiji could not say "No". He let him. The next day they parted.

CHAPTER VI

AT THE GRASS-ROOTS ONCE MORE

1

BACK IN Bihar, after the stifling heat and even more stifling political atmosphere of the capital, Gandhiji felt once more at ease. Not that the weather in Bihar was less trying or the political scene very pleasing but here he could, as he put it "work at the grass-roots". He had reasoned with the leaders of all sections and failed. Neither the Congress, nor the Muslim League, nor the British were prepared to follow his advice. The only thing that could possibly prevent the partition of India at that stage was a radical change in the overall situation. It was not by the magic of verbal persuasion alone but by the logic of the changed situation he had created in the masses that he had in the past been able to make the minds of the intelligentsia and the politicians at the top receptive to new modes of thought and action. He now set about to create a *milieu* in which the parties would be compelled to think afresh. There was not much time left. The tide was, in fact, setting fast against all he had cherished and worked for in his life. But pragmatism had never been his philosophy. Success did not lure him to, or failure deter him from striving. No-one knew better than he how "to fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run." He was to be less than three weeks in Bihar. He, nevertheless threw himself with all his soul into a supreme effort to wake up sluggish consciences and make people rise to the occasion to do their part while there was still time.

It was comparatively easy to bring home to the wrong-doers their guilt but very difficult to point out to the wronged the danger of wrong remedies and wrong attitudes. One day a group of Muslim Leaguers came to see him. He reiterated to them his conviction that if only the British retired from the scene, they would all most probably be able to unite. "Why cannot the Muslim League see that the first thing for all is to end India's slavery? Either the Muslims regard India as their home or they do not. If they do, then this senseless massacre of innocents should stop, the British made to quit and our own Government set up. We can then settle the question of partition by reasoning together or fight it out amongst ourselves, if necessary. But it would be a clean fight, not cowardly killing. On the other

hand, if the Muslims do not regard India as their home, the question of partition does not arise."

The Muslim League friends replied that they also condemned killings.

"Then you should issue a statement to that effect on behalf of the local Muslim League and write to Jinnah Saheb. That would be true service rendered to the Muslim League, and clear the atmosphere of unwarranted suspicion."

Gandhiji gave them full one hour. They said 'yes' to everything and promised to write to Jinnah. After they had left, Gandhiji remarked that though they had expressed many fine sentiments, he was afraid nothing would come out of it.

It was the same with the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, a nationalist organisation of Muslim divines and theologians. Gandhiji told a group of them that they should be concerned not with the wrongs that the Hindus had done but the wrong done to the Hindus by their co-religionists. They should condemn the atrocities committed by the Muslims and leave the erring Hindus to the judgment of their own co-religionists: "Go among the Hindus and remove their fear, not by verbal assurances but by appropriate action. Let them see what Islam is like at its best. If the nationalist Muslims do that even at the risk of their lives, they will have rendered service to Indian Muslims, heightened the prestige of Islam and God will bestow on them with His choicest blessings."

"Now tell me how many of you are prepared to take up this mission?"

In reply there was stony silence. At last one of them said: "What our brethren are doing is, of course, wrong. But they never had our support."

"That is my sorrow; we always think in terms of our individual self," rejoined Gandhiji. "What we should realise is that a crime committed by anyone in India is like a crime committed by each one of us; we have a share in it."

Gandhiji felt concerned. If the Indian Muslims, following the wrong lead of the Muslim League, continued to regard themselves as aliens and to behave as such, they would turn their non-Muslim neighbours, amidst whom they had to live—Pakistan or no Pakistan—into their permanent enemies and nobody then would be able to help them. He deeply sympathised with them and because he sympathised with them, he felt it all the more important to be firm and outspoken with them. In a letter to a Muslim League friend he wrote: "Such Muslims as regard India as their home will always be welcome to stay here and it will be the duty of the Government to give them full protection. At the same time the Muslims must realise that if they continue to harbour hatred in their hearts against the Hindus,

it will jeopardise the future of Indian Muslims even if Pakistan is established. I have received complaints that the harassment of the minority community in the Muslim majority areas has the passive support and sympathy of Bihar Muslims. I see no good coming out of it, if it is true."

Some Jamiat-e-Islamia people took a woman member of Gandhiji's party to visit the Muslim women in *purda*. The women were bitter. The woman visitor suggested that if some of them went to Noakhali and saw for themselves the plight of the Hindu women there, it might help to assuage their bitterness. The suggestion was made in all good faith. The underlying idea was that wrong done to any woman was a wrong done to Indian womanhood and must, therefore, be resisted by all — whether Hindus or Muslims. But the Jamiat people made a grievance even of this though it was explained to them that Gandhiji had said the same thing to the Hindus of Noakhali. When Gandhiji heard of it, he felt sad. He had asked the Jamiat people to let him meet the Muslim women but they were averse from it. It seemed as if they were more interested in exploiting Muslim bitterness than its removal and not eager to heal up old sores. "It is the way of self-destruction," he remarked to Dr. Mahmud and told him that he and nationalist Muslims like him should make it their special concern to wean the Muslim League as well as non-League Muslims from the cult of hatred and to cleanse their hearts of past bitterness.

In Noakhali the pressure of work used often to wake up Gandhiji at 2 a.m. There was besides the strain of constant travelling. But in Bihar the inner agony was greater because the wrong-doers were his own co-religionists. A person who had taken part in the riots came one day to him to make a confession. Gandhiji said to him: "Best repentance for a lapse is never to do it again. One should never allow the sun to set on an unconfessed sin. When we try to hide it we add to the original lapse the sin of untruth which is worse. It leads us deeper and deeper into the morass. A hidden sin is like a suppurating abscess. If we resolutely press the pus out, the ulcer quickly subsides and heals up. Otherwise the sepsis spreads inward and may even result in death. No matter how deep one may have gone in sin, even if at the last moment there is sincere repentance, God in His infinite mercy will forgive. Not even the most fallen is beyond redemption. All that is needed is prayer from a contrite heart. To pray for the well-being of all is the best of all prayers." He asked the ex-offender to return the looted property to a member of his (Gandhiji's) party, if he had not the courage to surrender it to the police. and further by way of expiation to dedicate himself to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Two days later, he took severely to task a section of the Hindus who had complained against the levying of punitive tax on an area, where the people were not helping the authorities to effect arrests of

absconders: "How disloyal of you to shelter fugitives from justice! You complain that innocent people are being victimised for the misdeeds of the hooligans but when the Government wants to take action to make the people cooperate in the arrest of the criminals, you raise a hue and cry. True, those who are harbouring the absconders are few but the remedy is in your hands. You should bring to light the real culprits so that many may not have to suffer for the sins of the few."

* * *

Since coming to Bihar, Gandhiji had deliberately confined himself to the Hindu-Muslim problem to the exclusion of almost every other topic. But he had to tackle the aggrarian question as an integral part of it. It was a difficult and thorny question. It became still more thorny and difficult when the landlord happened to be a Muslim and the tenants Hindus.

Bihar along with Bengal had been the victim of the Permanent Settlement of Lord Cornwallis (1785-93). Under it the zamindars paid the State a fixed revenue. This left them free to do virtually whatever they liked with their tenantry. The Congress had espoused the cause of peasants ever since the Champaran Satyagraha in 1917. But with the prospect of adult franchise, other political parties were not slow to make a bid for the support of the peasantry. In their political ambition, however, they tried the easy way of harping on rights without the wise, though less palatable, insistence on corresponding duties. The result was chaos. The zamindars tried forcibly to evict the tenants and oppressed them in a variety of ways; the *kisans* on the other hand tried to occupy the zamindars' lands. They forcibly cut crops, waylaid the zamindars and committed other acts of violence.

Gandhiji was seriously perturbed. This was not the manner in which people should react to freedom. He repeatedly warned them against the perils of the cult of violence. A deputation of zamindars complained to him of growing lawlessness among the peasantry and labour. Gandhiji told them that such lawlessness was criminal and was bound to recoil on the peasantry itself. But at the same time he warned them that, if what was being said about them was true, their days were numbered: "You have exploited the toilers long enough under British rule. You cannot continue to do so now. You have a future if you become the trustees of the poor *kisans* in the right sense of the term."

The next day a *kisan* leader came. He complained that by his remarks on the previous day Gandhiji had done an injustice to the peasants and the labourers and that it was the zamindars, on the contrary, who were continuing their old oppression. Gandhiji replied that even if this were true that was no reason for the peasants and the labourers to copy crime. They were the salt of the earth. If the salt lost its savour, wherewith would it then be salted? The correct way, if they wanted to assert their right, was not to take recourse to violence but

to win the goodwill and cooperation of the zamindars by a scrupulous discharge of their own duty. It was not difficult to make short work of the landlords and capitalists since they were only a handful. But if they embarked upon that course they would be applying the axe to their own roots. "The lesson of history is that those who seek to destroy others are themselves destroyed in their turn." The oppression and economic exploitation by the zamindars had of course to cease and they must pay the labour full wages. This they would be forced to do if the *kisans*, according to the terms of their agreement, performed full, honest labour. Otherwise, the zamindars would lose everybody's sympathy. This, at that stage of India's development, they could ill afford. He, therefore, hoped the *kisans* would treasure the rich experience of non-violence which they by their self-discipline and restraint had acquired during the Champaran Satyagraha, and which had brought about the end of a century-old oppression under the indigo planter *raj*.

* * *

The shadow of partition to Gandhiji was an indication of insufficient non-violence among Congressmen. He had noticed among Congress workers a regrettable proneness to resent criticism and attribute motives to those who differed from them. He missed no opportunity to bring home to them what a high degree of discernment and self-discipline are called for in a Satyagrahi and what the ideal of non-violence demanded of them in their day-to-day mutual relationship. "Science employs balances," he remarked to a group of them, "which will show the variation of even a millionth part of a grain of sand. Similarly, a Satyagrahi needs to develop a moral sensitiveness which will register deviation even by a millionth part of a hair from the ideal of truth and non-violence. He must not allow himself to be swayed by personal prejudice or prepossession in regard to any individual. Nor must he regard anyone as his opponent because he has adversely criticised him, or attribute such criticism to personal prejudice or dislike. A friend, brother or mother does not cease to be so by virtue of difference of opinion. A Satyagrahi must test and ascertain facts with a scientist's care and objectivity. To come to a conclusion without full proof is *himsa*. For experience shows that what sometimes appears to us as obvious at first sight may on subsequent investigation be found to be wrong. A votary of truth and non-violence must therefore take nothing for granted but keep his mind open to all points of view. He must be circumspect and scientific in his outlook and ever on the look-out for truth. To this scientific objectivity must be joined the quality of sympathy. For to sympathise is to understand." Indian Princes were an instance in point. "It is no use denouncing them. Circumstances have made them what they are. They can be won by love. Even the hardest of prejudices can be

broken down by sympathetic understanding. The British officials used to regard Charles Andrews with deep distrust in the beginning. Sometimes they were even rude to him. But he never harboured any resentment. He persevered and never lost hope. In the end they saw their mistake and were sorry for it."

Some of Gandhiji's most passionate exhortations were addressed to women—both Hindu and Muslim. He asked them to shed their helplessness. For them to be cowardly or timid was to betray their trust. They were not *abala*—the weaker sex. The ancient history of India was replete with shining examples of matchless heroines. "You can change the face of the country today," he told a group of Hindu women who came to see him, "if you are true to your heritage. You must have the courage to use the great strength which God has given you, the strength to suffer without inflicting suffering and to resist wrong so that you would break but not bend." His heart bled for women because they had been the worst sufferers during the communal frenzy. But he felt, they could not be altogether absolved from blame. If they had fully exercised their influence as mothers, wives and sisters over their men folk the deeds of shame that had been enacted could have been prevented. Instead, some of the women even crowed over the crimes committed by their men against Muslim women as being a fitting reprisal for what the Muslims had done and *vice versa*. He warned them that this would recoil upon them when their near and dear ones would bring back into their homes the "morals" they had been encouraged to practise outside the home. "I do not wish to live to witness the shame of women becoming instrumental in dragging India's ancient culture into the mire."

A group of Muslim *purda* women came to see Gandhiji some time later. Gandhiji told them that women's degeneration was due to the decay of faith among them. Prayer had come to be regarded as a superstition. It had become the fashion even to laugh at it. But the art of dying non-violently required the courage of faith and faith comes from prayer. "You call Him by any name you like—the essence is the same. It connotes the same law." To illustrate the power of love, he gave a homely example with which they were all familiar. Parents give a girl in marriage to an utter stranger. She adopts as her own the family she goes to live in. Presently she becomes mistress of the new house. All this is made possible by her loving heart. Her utter self-dedication and love enable her to win all hearts. If women put to use in relation to society this every-day experience, they would rule society as a young girl rules her household. If Muslim women learnt to regard Hindu women as their sisters, both would be uplifted. "It should be your prayer that God might arm you with the strength that comes from prayer and self-effacement, to serve your country and to die for it when the occasion demands it."

2

Since Gandhiji had become preoccupied with his mission of peace in Noakhali and Bihar, he had been unable to meet the workers of his different constructive work organisations. To make up for it a series of meetings with them were held in Patna in the last week of April, 1947.

The first meeting was devoted to a discussion of the problems of Basic education. Throughout his life, Gandhiji's had been essentially an educator's roll. The battle for independence in his hands became a double process of education — that of the masses in non-violent suffering and organisation and of the rulers in doing the right thing by those who were prepared to suffer for the right without even wishing to inflict suffering. Upon the right system of national education, therefore, depended not only the course of the non-violent struggle for freedom but the future of Indian independence itself — whether Indian independence would prove a beacon light and blessing to the world and point the way to bloodless realisation of a social order which would guarantee equal opportunity to grow to one's full height and freedom from oppression and fear to all, or whether it would add to the manifold problems of a sick, aching world the burden of another unsolved and, possibly, insoluble problem. University education as it obtained in India was "life-destroying". It served no useful purpose whatever and in fact did more harm than good. "Graduates turned out by the universities can think of nothing but finding clerical jobs for themselves. I have before me instances of young men who in spite of their University degrees are in my opinion quite uneducated." The only way to remedy the defects in their educational system, Gandhiji felt, was to impart education through the basic crafts. This transformation could not be effected by a stroke of the pen, ukases, discussions or even exhortations. But if those who were in a position of power, such as Congress Ministers, popular representatives in the Legislatures and officers of the Government, set an example by doing body-labour, be it even for an hour every day, it would create an atmosphere that would revolutionise their entire educational system.

Nai Talim or his new method of education was conceived by Gandhiji "as the spear-head of a silent, social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences." Unlike the Western type, which is predominantly materialistic and in which mind and body are the educator's primary concern to the subordination of the spirit, Nai Talim aimed at establishing "an equilibrium between body, mind and spirit." To fit New India for the task that lay ahead and to enable her to realise the full content of independence in terms of her teeming millions in the shortest time there was no other way comparable

with it. The system of education introduced by the foreign Government had been devised to perpetuate foreign domination and help in the exploitation of the country. It had produced a class of persons who had become aliens in their own surroundings, "Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect."[1] It had drained India of her wealth, undermined her culture, impoverished her languages and induced in her children a mentality which made them hug the chains that bound them.

The aim of Nai Talim was, on the other hand, to turn out instruments for India's non-violent freedom struggle and to realise "a non-violent, non-exploiting social order" which would ensure freedom and equality to all. A child who has had the benefit of Nai Talim, remarked Gandhiji to the basic education workers, should be courageous, healthy and eager to serve. He should be free from deceitfulness or other similar failings and be ready to go to the villages, serve the rural folk and be content to subsist upon whatever simple, coarse fare the villagers provided. "Whatever he has learnt, he should exemplify in his daily life, impress his stamp on his surroundings and create other young men in his likeness — this is my conception of a basically trained youngster." His conception of a Basic teacher was that he should be a craftsman-educationist. "His wife and children also will be craftsmen like him and share his labour of love and service. Only thus will the spirit of true cooperation between the teachers and the masses be born and the message of Nai Talim permeate every corner of India."

He was asked why in Nai Talim agriculture could not be the basic craft instead of spinning. His answer was that he had suggested spinning because agriculture had not the educational potentialities of spinning. "It cannot, for example, develop deftness, as spinning does. The function of Nai Talim is not merely to teach an occupation but, through it, to develop the whole man. But though I do not begin with agriculture, agriculture is bound to come in ultimately. The pupils and teachers of the school of my conception will together make provision for all they might need. Today, the condition of India is that those who grow vegetables in a village cannot afford to use them. The people of Travancore grow coconuts but they collect and send their produce to the towns to be processed or disposed of to provide money to pay for town products instead of using or processing their produce themselves. Those trained in Nai Talim will grow crops which they themselves need for consumption or processing. This will automatically make education free and universal." Regarding spinning, he went on to say that he was not out to make a fetish of it. "I shall be prepared to withdraw the solution that I have advanced for the last fifty years and own my mistake, if you can show me any other activity that can solve the problem of mass poverty and under-em-

ployment affecting 400 millions. Its great merit is its simplicity, inexpensiveness and universality. I admit that if eight hours' spinning is necessary to attain self-sufficiency in cloth, Khadi must die. One cannot give eight hours daily to spinning to the neglect of all other requirements. But it is my claim that if every one span just for one hour daily, India could be completely independent not only of imported cloth but even Indian mill cloth."

He was at pains to explain that Nai Talim did not begin and end with spinning and sanitation. "It should cultivate and purify the intellect and develop both body and soul. This is another way of saying that if you cannot develop the physical and spiritual faculties of the child through the medium of spinning and sanitation, you do not know your job."

What about the place of religious instruction in Basic education? Gandhiji was asked. He replied that he did not believe that a secular State should concern itself with religious education as such or could cope with it. For, if it attempted this, and there were people who wanted to give religious education of a wrong type, it could not interfere. "Those who want to give religious education may do so on their own, so long as it is not subversive of law and order and morality. The Government can only teach ethics on the main lines common to all religions and agreed to by all parties."

A teacher had written to him to ask how without violence to deal with problem-children. Gandhiji replied that the teacher must begin by ruling out corporal punishment. "Instead you should create a living bond of identity with the child under your care and punish him by inflicting a penalty upon yourself. When the child sees the teacher vicariously suffering for him, it will have the desired effect upon him and this will reform him." Incidentally, he mentioned that throughout his stay in South Africa, where he had to take care of a large number of Hindu and Muslim boys and girls, he could recall only one occasion when he had to mete out corporal punishment to a child. He had always found the non-violent way to be more *effective.*

The Central Advisory Board of Education of the Government of India, following the suggestion of the Working Committee of the National War Academy, had recommended that residential schools, where boys would develop the qualities of character and leadership required by the military authorities, should be started by Provinces and States to act as "feeders" for the National War Academy. It cut at the very root of Nai Talim, the core of which was non-violence. Gandhiji felt in every respect it was a very wrong decision. In a letter to the secretary to the Talimi Sangh, he wrote: "I think that we have to wait a long time before a nationwide decision on the point is made. Otherwise, we are likely to become a curse rather than a blessing to the world. Leaders are not made, they are born. Should the State

be in a hurry over this matter even before full independence is established?"[2]

The Minister for Education from Madras brought up the question of co-education. The point he made was that while he had no objection to co-education among children and grown-ups, who knew their own minds, he was not in favour of co-education at the impressionable age when most of the girls went to training schools. Gandhiji disagreed. "If you keep co-education in your schools, but not in your training schools, they will think there is something wrong somewhere. I shall allow my children to run the risk. We shall have to rid ourselves one day of this sex mentality. We should not look for examples from the West. If the teachers are intelligent, pure, and filled with the spirit of Nai Talim, there is no danger. Even if some accidents do take place, we should not be frightened by them. They take place anywhere." In his Ashram he had never fought shy of such risks and looking back he felt, in the sum, it had been a gain. But characteristically he left the ultimate decision to the questioner himself. "Although I speak thus boldly, may be, I am not fully aware of the attendant risks. You, as a responsible Minister, should think for yourself and act accordingly."

During India's non-violent struggle, women from all walks of life had come out of the seclusion of their homes to take their share with men in the fight for freedom and in the process had won their own. Boys and girls in thousands had joined the struggle. They worked together and mixed together with the greatest freedom. A number of old taboos were relaxed. Others were altogether discarded. But, if freedom resulted in moral indiscipline, Gandhiji warned, it would create a revulsion of feeling among the people and they would fight shy of allowing their mothers, sisters, wives and daughters to participate in the struggle. The practice of Satyagraha, he pointed out again and again, turns wholly upon the cultivation of inner discipline just as success in the profession of arms depends upon the cultivation of discipline imposed from the outside. To achieve a synthesis of freedom and inner discipline thus became one of the problems which the educationist in the field of Nai Talim had to face.

In the field of sexual morality, as elsewhere, Gandhiji was opposed to the easy-going expedient of suppressing the symptoms, while leaving the root-cause untouched. Thanks to the impact of the West, and the spread of imported pseudo-science, we live in the midst of what William James called "a plurality of universes". As a result, we develop split personalities. Often there is a contradiction between our inner life and outer. This has its inevitable repercussion on the growing psyche of the younger generation. The ghosts that we harbour within ourselves frighten us when they reincarnate themselves in our children's lives. Gandhiji, therefore, said that if parents and teachers

in their thought-world and private lives abandoned themselves to a licence that they deprecated in society, the enforcement of artificial taboos would only result in hypocrisy and perversion, mental aberrations and ill-health in the children. The proper course for parents and teachers is to remove the dichotomy in their own being and set an example in correct conduct and behaviour which they desire their children to follow. Mental hygiene can obtain only in an atmosphere of freedom, not in that of unnatural constraint.

3

The assumption of power by the Congress brought to a head the question of relationship between the constructive work organisations and the Congress Government at the Centre. Gandhiji was of the opinion that now that they had their own Government in power, it would be a pity if constructive work organisations had to go about collecting funds from the public as before. The Government should provide them with all the funds they needed for their work. Even otherwise, for instance, if the Talimi Sangh found that the Government help was not forthcoming in an adequate measure, it should restrict its field of experiment but keep the principle of self-sufficiency intact. Self-sufficiency was not the end of Nai Talim but a test of its efficiency. It should inevitably follow if Nai Talim was properly conducted. It would be a dereliction of duty to divert their time and energy from the work of education to that of collecting funds. He was utterly opposed to the practice of backing educational institutions by large reserves of funds. "We should begin with just the amount needed to meet the initial expenses and then set our mind completely against asking for even a pie from anyone — say after three years. If we cannot make the experiment self-sufficient at the end of that period, it is better openly to own defeat. There should be no shame in it; it would only show true humility and establish our integrity."

What should be their attitude if the Government asked them to undertake basic education experiments on a Governmental basis in a certain area? he was asked. Gandhiji replied that they must be wary of undertaking responsibility beyond their capacity. Otherwise they would create an embarrassing situation for the Government and bring discredit upon themselves. It was best to know one's limitations and to proceed accordingly.

Gandhiji felt unhappy at the attitude of the Congress Ministries towards the various constructive work organisations. These were the creation of the Congress. But in its preoccupation with politics, the Congress had not taken much interest in them. In the beginning when Congress was in the wilderness and Congressmen

had neither the personnel nor the finances, nor the know-how to handle ambitious projects, they willy-nilly occupied themselves with constructive work. Even so, it had yielded a rich harvest. Then they came into power and it proved to be a heady wine. "From the present signs, it seems, it will take them considerable time to digest it." It was not yet too late for the Congress to overhaul its organisation and save itself from crumbling, he warned. But if they let go their present opportunity, *soon it would be too late and the tide of Communism would overwhelm them. "I see it clearly. There will be rivers of blood and a holocaust such as you cannot today envisage."* To the Bihar Ministers he said: "I have been thinking furiously about my duty in the face of what is taking place. Remember, it is not a crown of diamonds that you have been called upon to wear but a crown of thorns."

There was lack of coordination between the Congress Ministries and the Congress organisation in the Provinces, and between the constructive work bodies and the Ministries. Constructive workers complained that the Congress Ministries were not doing enough to help constructive work. While sharing that feeling, Gandhiji was anxious that it should not lead to bad blood between the two. *The function of constructive work was to bring strength to the elbow of the Government. But if the latter chose not to avail itself of it or was indifferent, constructive workers should not on that account harbour bitterness. That would be a negation of non-violence, which is the soul of constructive work.* Their duty as pioneers was to forge ahead, remove in a cooperative spirit the obstacles in the Government's path and mould the country's politics by building up by constructive work the power of non-violence among the masses. *There was a danger of constructive work losing its revolutionary role by too much dependence on Government funds.* Constructive work must not allow itself to become the handmaiden of shifting politics. They should avail themselves of Government help if it were forthcoming on their terms but not feel frustrated, or cavil at it, if it belied their expectation or fell short of it.

> We have an ocean to cross. Our testing time has come. Thunderous clouds are lowering in the sky. We are surrounded by a thick fog. Better pilots than those we have at the helm of our affairs cannot be found to keep the vessel on an even keel or to steer us to safety. This is no time for fault-finding. Each one of us has to gird up his loins and contribute the best of what he is capable.

"We all want independence," Gandhiji remarked to the members of the newly formed Peace Committee. "The Congress has ceaselessly laboured for it and made tremendous sacrifices. I am afraid we have

been indifferently loyal to the Congress organisation. It would be better either to disband it or to get out of it. Let us not mar its splendid achievement by playing fast and loose with it."

It was a Herculean task to cleanse the people's hearts of prejudice and passion, communalism, personal jealousies and the like. Internal dissensions among Congressmen had brought down the standard of public life with the result that disorganisation, indiscipline and indifference to duty were everywhere on the increase. Gandhiji exhorted Congressmen to prepare themselves by purging themselves of all baser passions for the great responsibility that would descend upon them with the transfer of power. They should acquire the special skills and knowledge that would enable them to serve the masses effectively. Upon the attainment of independence, all would then instinctively feel the change from the era of irresponsible, alien bureaucratic domination to non-violent, democratic self-rule. He would live in the hope, he concluded, that "the exercise of self-rule will awaken in us a natural sense of responsibility and cure many of our present aberrations."

* * *

Just as Gandhiji saw danger in Congressmen developing a feeling of vested interests on the score of their past sacrifices, he was equally alive to the danger of a secterian feeling growing up among constructive workers. "Now that Swaraj is coming," Gandhiji wrote in a letter to a co-worker, "we need the cooperation and service of every individual for sustaining it. In 1942, X carried on mendacious propaganda outside India not only in respect of me but even in regard to poor Kasturba's illness and demise. But today we must make use of his talents, too, as we are doing. The same applies to constructive work organisations. We should discard old prejudices. We need to harness the energy of each and all to build up our strength."

Gandhiji had suggested in the meeting of the All-India Spinners' Association to take the wife of a well-known textile king on the Board of Trustees of the Association. Though she was the wife of a mill magnate, she had dedicated herself utterly to the country's cause, not at anybody's bidding but through her own inner prompting. The inclusion of such a woman in the Board, he felt, would help him to convert the mill-owner class. "She is an experienced worker, and an ideal wife and mother," he told them, "and in spite of being a millionaire's wife, a model of simplicity and renunciation." The Trustees of the Spinners' Association, however, objected that to follow that course would be against the constitution of the Association, which laid down that no mill-owner or dealer in mill-cloth could be a Trustee. Still, if Gandhiji insisted, they said, they would nominate her. But Gandhiji never asked his colleagues to do anything that did not appeal to their head and heart. So, he did not press the point further.

In a letter to the woman, he wrote: "I have often of late noticed that my word does not carry weight with my co-workers and colleagues as it once used to do. In a way it pleases me. May be, I was stifling their reason before and it has now found its freedom. Or, is my thinking out of tune with the times? Be that as it may, what I expect of you is that you will continue to take interest in developing the science of Khadi as if you were actually a Trustee of the Spinners' Association and belie the doubts and fears of the sceptics by showing to them that the wife of a millionaire can be as much a lover of Khadi as the most ardent of Khadi workers."

The round of talks ended with a meeting with the workers of the Sadaquat Ashram, Patna. Gandhiji explained to them the science behind his concept of threefold decentralisation — in industry, in economics and in Government. Decentralisation, unlike its opposite, made for endurance and social stability. He likened it to the institution of domestic cooking which "refuses to be outmoded by the march of time and science". *Basic self-sufficiency and self-reliance,* he emphasised, *were "the key to individual and corporate non-violence."*

In the meeting with the workers of the Harijan Sevak Sangh that followed, a challenging poser was presented. The Harijans were asking why, if the caste Hindus were sincere in their professions of equality between the "touchables" and "untouchables", no inter-marriages were being celebrated. What should be the caste Hindus' answer to that? Gandhiji replied that the Harijans had a right to ask that question. He had already conceded their point. Marriage was a strictly personal affair. While nobody could be compelled to contract a marriage against his or her will, on the ground of caste there should be no bar to such inter-marriages. He reminded them how he had long ago made it a rule not to be present at, or give his blessings for any wedding unless one of the parties was a Harijan. Untouchability in the sense of pollution by touch had already become a thing of the past. What was needed now was the cultural and economic uplift of the Harijans so that the very distinction between "touchables" and "untouchables" would be obliterated.

4

Socrates described himself as "a sort of gadfly" given by God to the State that needed to be stirred into life by constant stinging "like a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions owing to his very size." One wonders if Congressmen and Congress Ministers did not find in Gandhiji a similar gadfly and sometimes feel exasperated like the sleeper in Plato's Apology on being "suddenly awakened from

sleep". But he could not do otherwise. The hour of decision was fast approaching. The sands were fast running out. In the course of a conversation with two English women visitors one day he remarked that though the British power would before long be withdrawn, *India would not really be free so long as the people of India were under the domination of foreign culture, foreign language and foreign ways of living. "It has made our standard of living needlessly costly and artificial. Not till we have freed ourselves from it shall we be really free."*[3] It was for Congress Ministers and legislators to set an example in that respect if the complexion of administration under independence was to be any different from what it was under British rule. *If the people did not feel the change, there would be no revolutionary fervour or mass upsurge and, in the absence of spontaneous and enthusiastic cooperation of the masses, they would not be able to solve their problems without the assistance of the British power. For this they would have to pay a heavy price, as they had already found to their cost.*

After the visitors had left, the Bihar Ministers came in. Gandhiji unfolded to them in this wise his conception of Indian Ministers and Governors in independent India:

1. They should, so far as possible, use articles of Indian manufacture, use Khadi exclusively for themselves and members of their family and do sacrificial spinning regularly to keep the wheel of non-violence going.

2. They should learn both Nagari script and the Persian, abjure the use of English among themselves and use instead their Provincial language. Hindustani should be their medium for all official purposes and all their office orders and circulars should be issued in it so that Hindustani would automatically become the *lingua franca* of India.

3. They should be completely free from the taint of untouchability, casteism, discrimination and partiality. A high-placed functionary should be equi-minded as regards his brother, son or an ordinary citizen—be he an artisan or a labourer.

4. Their personal life should be a model of simplicity. They should perform body-labour for at least one hour daily either in the form of spinning or scavenging, growing of food or of vegetables to help the country to make good the food shortage.

5. They should not live in bungalows or own cars. They should live in an unostentatious residence. They might make use of a motor car but sparingly only for special reasons.

6. By living in one place or close to one another, Ministers, their families and their staff would come into closer touch with one another. This would ensure better coordination among them.

7. They and the members of their family should, so far as possible, avoid the use of servants and do their own domestic chores.

8. The use of costly foreign furniture, sofas, chairs, tables etc. should be avoided, particularly in view of the economic crisis through which the country and the people were passing.

9. The Ministers should be free from all vices and addictions. If they set an example in plain living and high thinking, they would need no bodyguards. People themselves would provide all the security they might require instead of their having to invoke security measures against the people.

"May be, mine will prove to be a cry in the wilderness," he concluded. "*But I cannot remain silent as I do not want to go down as an unprotesting witness of what is taking place around me in the country today*. It is up to the Bihar of Dr. Rajendra Prasad to set an example in this regard."[4]

He reverted to the theme in the course of a conversation with some workers the next day. If Government of India incurred even a pie of unnecessary expenditure, he remarked, he would say it was no better than the British Government. If he had his way, he would not tolerate "even a foreign pin in any of the Government offices". If India-made pins were not available, they should do without pins. Papers could be stitched together with needle and thread instead. "I go even so far as to say that all this is implied in the oath of allegiance which the Ministers take. But I would like a separate oath to be administered to them in addition requiring them to use *swadeshi* goods only, for their personal and office requirements. If I were the Chief Minister of Bihar, my first act would be to make the wearing of Khadi compulsory for all Government servants and the people at large, not by purchasing it from the Khadi shops but by making it a rule that no ration-card holder would be entitled to draw his ration unless he span for half-an-hour daily."

It was clear to him, he said, that if they all learnt to spin and to weave, India could not only become self-sufficient in the matter of cloth without dependence upon mills but could even clothe the world. It was simple arithmetic. And if knowing all that, they could not get even that much done, what were the Ministers good for and what was their statecraft worth? He was afraid, they had developed the habit of making simple things which admitted of very simple solutions unnecessarily difficult and complicated. What they needed was not costly and elaborate machinery or highly paid technicians and experts, but plain commonsense, combined with the will to go down to the masses, share their lives, think in their terms and win their confidence. They should teach them by personal example how they could in the immediate present provide themselves with what they so sorely needed but had hitherto lacked. The masses would instinctively feel that the era of the common man had arrived.

* * *

The weather was very warm. Gandhiji had frequently to wipe his body with a wet towel and to keep a piece of wet cloth wrapped

round his head. Dr. Mahmud, his good host, wished to send for some ice to cool the water for the purpose. But Gandhiji objected and, as a small illustration of what he had been telling the Ministers, told him that the best way to cool the water in the Indian summer was to put a piece of wet cloth round a porous earthen pot. "It makes the water refreshingly cool and, what is more, unlike iced water, there is no danger of catching a chill by the use of such water."

The sharpest lesson that the Bihar Ministers had from him came a few days later. He had received a complaint that they were not sincerely and straightforwardly implementing the rehabilitation policy they had agreed to in his presence. Even a suspicion that they were not playing the game hurt him deeply. "I am told that the Ministers tell me one thing and do another," he said to them. "That is not how we shall be able to attain or to maintain independence. If you nod assent merely to flatter me, you are being unfaithful to me, to your people and to your trust. I do not claim to be infallible. If what I say does not appeal to you, you should straightaway tell me so and try to convince me of my error. By nodding a formal assent when you actually believe me to be wrong, you wrong me and put yourself in the wrong. You must realise that what is happening in the Punjab, Bihar and Bengal is hindering Indian independence."

The closer an individual was to Gandhiji, the more exacting Gandhiji was with him. The Bihar Ministers were his old colleagues and comrades-in-arms, bound to him by the closest of ties. Having received much from them he expected more and still more from them and did not hesitate to exercise the privilege of speaking to them as perhaps he would not have done to any other. But he may afterwards have felt that he had been less than fair in judging them without fully taking into consideration their side of the case. When they again met him on the last day of his stay in Bihar, he made amends by telling them that what he had said to them on the previous occasion must not be taken by way of condemnation but only as a measure of his jealous concern for them. "I do not hope to be able to find better colleagues than you. I entertain high hopes of you. It hurts me, therefore, when I hear anyone criticising you with good reason."

* * *

It required no small degree of inner certitude to retain faith in India's destiny and the potency of non-violence when human nature seemed to have sunk so low. But the more the darkness outside deepened, the clearer became his inner vision and the more emphatic his reaffirmation of faith. The advent of the atom bomb, he told some Congress workers, had only strengthened his belief that the weapon of Ahimsa was the only weapon which was destined ultimately to defeat the atom bomb and render obsolete all other weapons: "Ahimsa is soul force and the soul is imperishable, changeless and eternal. The

atom bomb is the acme of physical force and, as such, subject to the law of dissipation, decay and death that governs the physical universe. Our scriptures bear witness that when soul force is fully awakened in us, it becomes irresistible. But the test and condition of full awakening is that it must permeate every pore of our being and emanate with every breath that we breathe."

In the course of a talk with a foreign visitor he remarked that although he had not been able to inculcate in his people the non-violence of his conception, he knew that there could be no happiness for the Indian masses except through Ahimsa. "Even Russia which swore by democracy has begun to betray imperialist trends. It is a tragedy. The only antidote that can save the world is non-violence." Independent India, he was sure, would wish to cultivate the friendship of the whole world and not to harbour old grudges. "In the exercise of our independence, we might commit mistakes or feel baffled by difficulties; sometimes we might even feel frustrated and bitterly disillusioned. That does not frighten me. We shall learn through our mistakes. But if the Congress resiles from the ideals of truth and non-violence, it will lose its power and prestige. *But no institution can be made non-violent by compulsion. Non-violence and truth cannot be written into a constitution. They have to be adopted of one's own free will. They must sit naturally upon us like next-to-skin garments or else they become a contradiction in terms.*"

To a friend he wrote: "I note with deep sorrow what you say about the Congress. Let us live in the hope that God's goodness will prevail and Satan will be dethroned."[5]

5

Gandhiji had received a number of letters about cow protection from people belonging to the Hindu Mahasabha. Their argument was that Muslims being beef eaters were the "natural enemies" of the Hindus. Gandhiji regarded himself as an ardent cow protectionist. He had described cow protection as the "central fact of Hinduism",[6] the "dearest possession of the Hindu heart"[7] and the "gift of Hinduism to the world"[8] but he had never been able to appreciate the antipathy of the so-called cow protectionists towards those who did not believe in cow protection—particularly the Muslims. He regarded such behaviour as a mockery of the great ideal.

Perhaps no aspect of Gandhiji's philosophy is so misunderstood in the West as his attitude on cow protection. It would be worthwhile here, therefore, to examine it in some detail.

What is cow protection which Hinduism enjoins? Is it the mechanical act of saving the cow *per se*, or saving it anyhow? Again, would the ideal of cow protection be served if, for instance, all the

cows could by some means be transported to the moon, or if, as an irresponsible wag once suggested, all the cows of India were to be injected with the pig's serum to turn them into forbidden food for the Muslims? Certainly not. According to Gandhiji, that would be the negation, a caricature of the true meaning of cow protection.

There is a celebrated episode in one of India's epics that sets forth the inner meaning of the ideal of cow protection. King Dilip, one of Rama's ancestors, being childless, sought the advice of his preceptor, the sage Vasishtha. The latter told him that for the fulfilment of his desire he must propitiate Surabhi, the divine cow, who had pronounced upon him a curse for an insult that he had once unwittingly offered her. Dismissing all his servants the king took the cow into the forest to serve and to protect her as directed by the sage. So great was the power of his love that when he entered a forest the forest-fires were stilled "without any shower of rain and there appeared on the trees an abundance of blossom and fruit and the stronger animals no longer oppressed the weaker ones."

Thus passed "thrice seven days". To put the devotion of her protector to the test, while the king was lost in contemplating the grandeur of the surrounding mountain scenery, the cow one day entered a cave in the Himalayas, and was immediately seized by the lion who dwelt there. Hearing her plaintive lowing, the king fitted an arrow to his bow to shoot the lion but all of a sudden found his limbs frozen as if by a magic spell. Noticing his helplessness, the lion mockingly told him that he was no ordinary lion but Kumbhodara, the servant of Lord Shiva. By virtue of the god's blessing, no weapon could prevail against him. "Abandon, therefore, thy hopeless attempt and return home. . . . A warrior need feel no shame or humiliation in failing to protect a charge that cannot be protected by arms." "I know I am helpless," the king replied. "But one thing still remains to me. I offer thee my body as ransom for the cow. Appease thou thy hunger with my flesh and let the cow go." The lion expostulated: "If compassion be your motive, your decision is wrong since by your death you will save only one cow whereas if you live for many a year you will, as the father of your people, protect them against all troubles. If on the other hand, it is your preceptor's displeasure that you are afraid of, you can propitiate him by making him a gift of crores of cows with udders as big and full as water-pitchers." The king pleaded with the lion: "Pray, accept my body but let my name remain." "So be it," the lion replied. At this the king laying his arms, "threw himself before the wild beast like a bolus of flesh" so that it might make a meal of him. But lo and behold, instead of the dreadful leap of the lion, which he had expected, flowers began to be showered upon him from heaven and a voice was heard to say, "Rise up, my son. Thy vow is fulfilled." He got up and found the

cow standing before him "like his own mother—her udders overflowing with milk—and nowhere the lion."

The ordeal was over. The cow now revealed to the king her secret. The lion was a phantom created by herself to test his devotion. The fulfilment of his vow demanded not the emptying of the exchequer, nor the prowess of his arms but the practice of that supreme love which can tame wild beasts and quench the forest-fires even but which attains its culmination when to save another's life one lays down one's own.

The cow, whose service and protection are enjoined by Hinduism is not the cow, merely the animal, but the cow which in the sacred lore of the Hindus is depicted as "the personification of the agony of the earth" pleading before the Great White Throne of God, whenever the earth grows weary under its load of iniquity. It is a spiritual ideal and the way to its realisation is penance and self-purification, otherwise spelt as universal love.

* * *

To Schweitzer in our time belongs the credit of propounding to the West the philosophy of reverence for life. It is considered one of his greatest achievements that he includes the treatment of plants and animals in his system of ethics. "We act ethically if we further life in its many forms. We act unethically if we destroy life or frustrate the will-to-live."[9] Schweitzer's philosophy has been explained thus: "In the biological sphere life conflicts with life. Yet human beings transcend this sphere and in them life becomes conscious of other life and thus of conflicting wills-to-live, by recognising each other as parts of the same universal will-to-live, they become reconciliated in the ethical precept of reverence for life."[10] The corollary derived from this is that "when life in all its forms (including animals and plants) is respected, all nations must have an equal right to live their lives. . . . Aggressive nationalism is possible only on a level on which one possessed of a national will-to-live has not yet become ethically aware of others like him."[11]

Gandhiji's ideal of cow protection was related to his philosophy of universal non-violence. "The cow to me means the entire subhuman world. Man through the cow is enjoined to realise his identity with all that lives."[12] Cow protection, therefore, means, "the protection of the weak and the helpless."[13] Logically speaking, therefore, said Gandhiji, "a Hindu who protects the cow should protect every animal."[14]

Schweitzer, confronted by the inevitable contradiction between his doctrine of reverence for life and its full practice, resolved the contradiction for himself in this wise: "The farmer who has mown down a thousand flowers in his meadow to feed his cows, must be careful on his way home not to strike off in thoughtless pastime the

head of a single flower by the roadside, for he thereby commits a wrong against life without being under the pressure of necessity."[15]

Gandhiji admits that to be absolutely consistent, a Hindu who protects the cow should protect every animal. "But taking all things into consideration, we may not cavil at his protecting the cow because he fails to protect the other animals. The only question, therefore, to consider is whether he is right in protecting the cow. And he cannot be wrong in so doing if non-killing of animals generally may be regarded as a duty for one who believes in Ahimsa."[16] The protection of the cow was to him the first step, not the last, in the practice of his philosophy of universal non-violence. "He is a poor specimen of Hinduism who stops merely at cow protection when he can extend the arm of protection to other animals. . . . Protection of the cow is the least he is expected to undertake."[17]

Gandhiji had worked out for himself the reason for India selecting the cow for special care. "The cow was in India the best companion. She was the giver of plenty. . . . Cow protection to me is one of the most wonderful phenomena in human evolution. It takes the human being beyond his species. . . . The cow is a poem of pity. One reads pity in the gentle animal. She is the mother to millions of Indian mankind. Protection of the cow means protection of the whole dumb creation of God."[18]

There are other socio-economic facets to the ideal of cow protection, relating to the "economy of permanence" in a non-violent social order. These are discussed elsewhere in these pages. (See Chapter XXI).

Thus conceived, cow protection could not be carried on at the point of the sword. The *rishis* (sages) who had enjoined cow protection as the supreme duty on the Hindus had also said that its performance led to *moksha* (salvation). Now it did not stand to reason that by merely protecting the animal cow, one could attain *moksha*:

> For *moksha* one must completely get rid of one's lower feelings like attachment, hatred, anger, jealousy etc. . . . The cow protection which can bring one *moksha* must from its very nature include the protection of everything that feels. Therefore, in my opinion, every little breach of the Ahimsa principle, like causing hurt by harsh speech to anyone . . . to cause pain to the weakest and the most insignificant creature on earth, would be a breach of the principle of cow protection. . . .[19]

The way to protect the cow, thus defined, is to die for her. The Hindus committed no sin, said Gandhiji, if they could not prevent cow slaughter at the hands of Muslims, but they sinned grievously when in order to save the cow they quarrelled with the Muslims. "Even a Hindu



David D. Duncan. Courtesy: Life magazine

Gandhiji and the New Viceroy. "There was a tacit recognition on both sides that this was their last chance of a peaceful settlement of the Indo-British question." (page 77) [ONE

1. So far as Pakistan is concerned and so far as the Congress is concerned nothing will be yielded to force. But everything just will be conceded readily if it appeals to reason. Since nothing is to be forcibly taken, it should be open to any province or part thereof, to abstain from joining Pakistan and remain with the remaining provinces. Thus, so far as the Congress is aware today, the Frontier Province is with it (Congress) and the Eastern part of the Punjab where the Hindus and the Sikhs combined have a decisive majority will remain out of the Pakistan zone. Similarly in the East, Assam is clearly outside the zone of Pakistan and the western part of Bengal including Darjeeling, Dinajpur, Calcutta, Burdwan, Midnapore, Khulna, 24-Parganas etc., where the Hindus are in a decisive majority will remain outside the Pakistan zone. And since the Congress is willing to concede to reason everything just, it is open to the Muslim League to appeal to the Hindus, by present just treatment, to reconsider their expressed view and not to divide Bengal.

2. It is well to mention in this connection that if the suggested agreement goes through, the Muslim League will participate fully in the Constituent Assembly in a spirit of cooperation. It might also be mentioned that it is the settled policy with the Congress that the system of separate electorates has done the greatest harm to the national cause and therefore the Congress will insist on joint electorates throughout with reservation of seats wherever it is considered necessary.

3. The present raid of Assam and the contemplated socalled civil disobedience within should stop altogether.

4. Muslim League intrigues, said to be going on, with the frontier tribes for creating disturbances in the Frontier province and onward should also stop.

5. Frankly anti-Hindu legislation hurried through the Sind Legislature in utter disregard of Hindu feeling and opposition should be abandoned.

-2-

6. The attempt that is being nakedly pursued in the muslim majority provinces to pack civil and police services with muslims irrespective of merit and to the deliberate exclusion of Hindus must be given up forthwith.

7. Speeches inciting to hatred including murder, arson and loot should cease.

8. Newspapers like the Dawn, Morning News, Star of India, Azad and others, whether in English or in any of the Indian Vernaculars, should change their policy of inculcating hatred against the Hindus.

9. Private armies under the guise of national guards, secretly or openly armed, should cease.

10. Forcible conversion, rape, abduction, arson and loot culminating in murders of men, women and children by Muslims should stop.

11. What the Congress expects the Muslim League to do will readily be done in the fullest measure by the Congress.

12. What is stated here applies equally to the inhabitants of Princes India, Portuguese India and French India.

13. The foregoing is the test of either's sincerity and that being granted publicly and in writing in the form of an agreement, the Congress would have no objection whatsoever to the Muslim League forming the whole of the Cabinet consisting of Muslims only or partly Muslims and partly nonmuslims.

14. Subject to the foregoing the Congress pledges itself to give full cooperation to the Muslim League Cabinet if it is formed and never to use the Congress majority against the League with the sole purpose of defeating the Muslims. On the contrary every measure will be considered on its merits and receive full cooperation from the Congress members whenever a particular measure is provably in the interests of the whole of India.

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Implications of the "Master Plan". "The formula I had sketched before you...I had filled in for the members of

CONFIDENTIAL

TERMS OF OFFER

1. Full acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan and withdrawl by the League of its resolutions of Bombay and Karachi and restoration of the original Delhi resolution accepting the proposals.

2. Congress has accepted the British Cabinet Statement of December 6, 1946.

3. For the interim period the Congress agrees that the League President should form the Cabinet.

4. Congress Party in the Central Legislature will support the Government so formed.

5. The Cabinet will undertake to administer from the point of view of the interest of India as a whole. If there should be any difference in the Cabinet on the question Lord Mountbatten in his personal capacity will have the right to intervene.

6. Lord Mountbatten will have also the right of veto for the protection of minorities' interests during the interim period.

7. If this offer is not accepted by the League then the Congress should form the Cabinet on identical terms.

MEA.

.....:000:.....

TERMS OF OFFER

Whereas mutual distrust and rivalry between the communities is disturbing the peace and security of the country and creating fresh grounds for bitterness and hatred, and

Whereas the framing of the future constitution of the country requires an atmoshere of goodwill and understanding,

the following measures are hereby proposed in order to remove the causes of distrust, hatred and rivalry and to create the necessary atmosphere for an amicable solution of all constitutional and other problems viz :-

1. Full acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan and withdrawal by the League of its resolutions of Bombay and Karachi and restoration of the original Delhi resolution accepting the proposals.

2. Congress has accepted the British Cabinet Statement of December 6, 1946.

3. For the interim period the Congress agrees that the League President should form the Cabinet.

4. Congress Party in the Central Legislature will support the Government so formed.

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6. Lord Mountbatten will have also the right of veto for the protection of the minorities' interests during the interim period.

7. Congress-League Coalition Ministries will be formed in every province.

8. If this offer is not accepted by the League, then the Congress should form the Central Cabinet on identical terms.

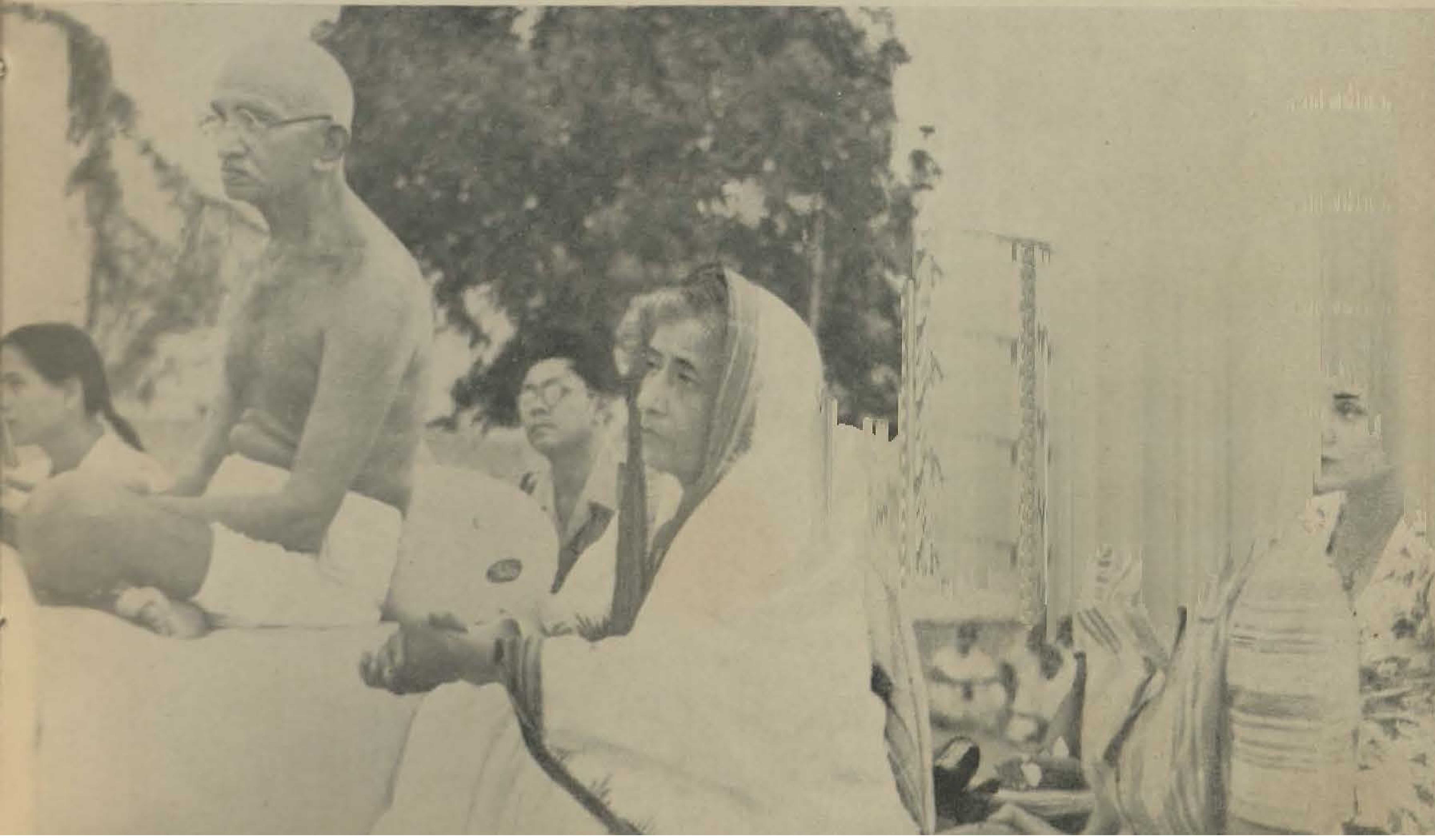
FOUR] The "Master Plan". Two drafts of Terms of Offer. (Left) Maulana Azad's draft. (Right) Another draft. "Thus I have to ask you to omit me from your consideration." (page 85)

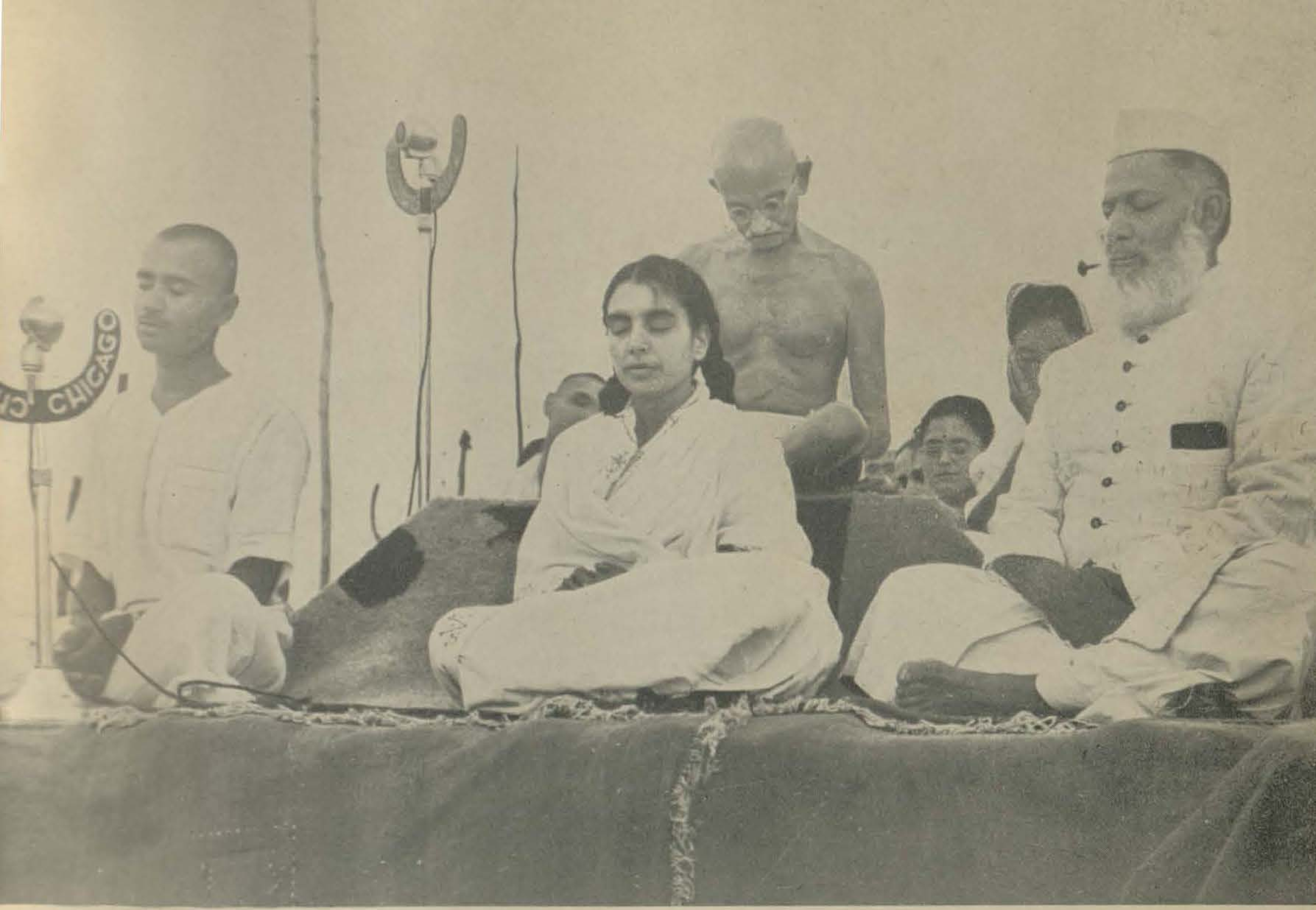


Hindustan Times

(Above) Lady Mountbatten with Gandhiji. "A secret weapon of no small strategic value." (page 75). (Below) Viceroy's daughter Pamela at Gandhiji's prayer meeting. (page 77)

Hindustan Times





Margarate Bourke-White. Courtesy: Life magazine

(Above) Khwaja Abdul Majid at Gandhiji's prayer meeting. Gandhiji: "If a fanatic should kill you, I shall dance with joy!" (page 100). [FIVE

(Below) Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru participating in mass spinning. "The only royal road to the deliverance of the country." (page 100)

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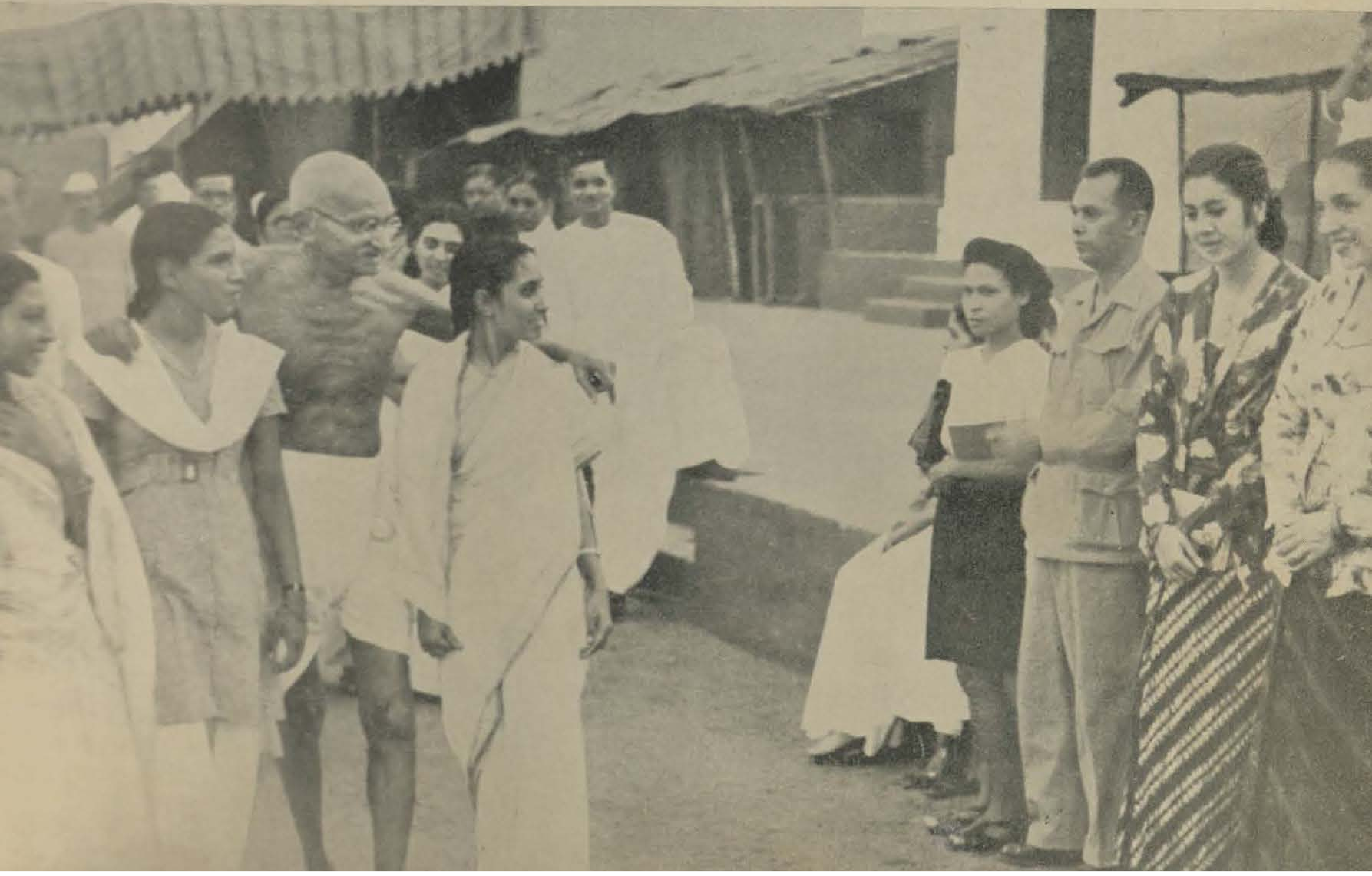
SIX] *The Message of the East.* Gandhiji at the Asian Relations Conference. From left to right: Sarojini Naidu and Pandit Nehru. "I would not like to live in this world if it is not to be one world." (page 90) "You will complete the conquest of the West not through vengeance ...but through love...and that conquest will be loved by the West itself." (page 92)

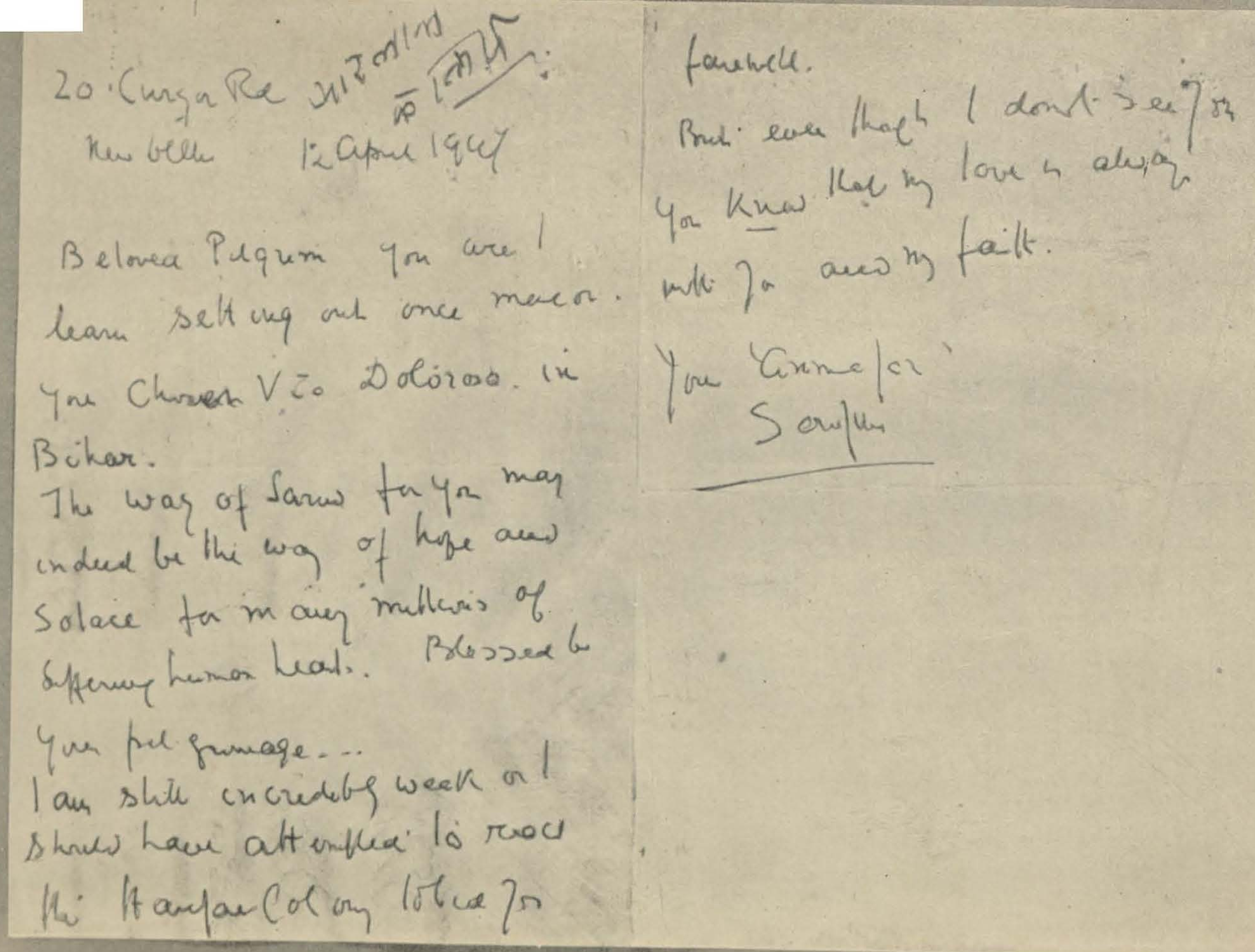


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(Above & Below) Delegates and visitors to Asian Conference with Gandhiji. "He is unlike anyone else we have ever met." (page 99) [SEVEN

Kundanlal





20 Curzon Rd [illegible]

New Delhi 12 April 1947

Beloved Pilgrim you are

learn setting out once more on

your chosen Via Dolorosa in

Bihar.

The way of sorrow for you may

indeed be the way of hope and

solace for many millions of

suffering human hearts. Blessed be

your pilgrimage...

I am still incredibly weak or I

should have attempted to reach

the Harijan Colony to bid you

farewell.

But even though I don't see you

you know that my love is always

with you and my faith.

Your Ammajee

Sarojini

EIGHT]

Sarojini Naidu's letter to Gandhiji: "The way of sorrow for you may indeed be the way of hope and solace for... suffering human hearts." (page 86)

State may not prohibit cow slaughter for purposes considered to be religious by any of its subjects, without the consent of the intelligent majority of such subjects, so long as such slaughter is conducted in private and without any intention of provoking or giving offence to Hindus."[20] Hindus were enjoined to protect the cow by their penance, self-purification and self-sacrifice. "It is not Hinduism to kill a fellow-man even to save the cow."[21]

In practice, however, cow protection had degenerated into a permanent feud with the Muslims. When properly understood, said Gandhiji, cow protection should mean "conquering the Muslims by our love".[22] Instead it had even provoked communal riots. Gandhiji characterised all the riots that had taken place in the name of cow protection as "an insane waste of effort".[23]

Convinced that what is good ethics must also be good economics and *vice versa*, Gandhiji worked out a system of the economics of cow protection which automatically provided for "the delicate religious side" also. Cow slaughter, he suggested, could be and should be made economically impossible, whereas, unfortunately, of all places in the world it is in cow-protecting India that the sacred animal for the Hindus has become the cheapest for slaughter. The milk yield of the cow could be doubled by scientific care. If farmyard manure was properly utilised for composting, its value could and should be set off against the cow's upkeep. Similarly profits from the milk trade and the economic utilisation of the hides, bones, flesh, fat and horns, etc. of dead cattle could provide revenue sufficient to maintain the old cattle instead of such cattle being sent to the slaughter house or turned out of doors to die of starvation and neglect. Gandhiji, therefore, asked the Hindus to shed their traditional prejudice against the handling of carcasses and to use milk and milk products from dairies run solely on cow protection lines, and leather manufactured from the hides of cows that had died through natural causes, from tanneries especially set up for the purpose to the exclusion of any other, even at a premium, and thus make the slaughter of the cow for beef uneconomical.

But though the question thus lends itself to economic treatment, the motive that actuates cow protection is not altogether selfish, "though selfish considerations undoubtedly enter into it".[24] Bernard Shaw put the whole thing in a nut-shell in his characteristic Shavian way when he met Gandhiji in London: "It is as mean to send the cow to the slaughter house when she becomes old as to send your mother to the gallows when she falls sick or has ceased to give suck!" If the basis of cow protection were "purely selfish, the cow would be killed as in other countries after it had ceased giving full use. The Hindu (on the other hand) will not kill the cow even though she may be a heavy burden."[25]

With merciless logic, Gandhiji pointed out the illogicality and the self-defeating nature of the fanaticism of those who imagined that religion could be served by hating those who did not share their religious sentiment while they did little to practise love towards the object of their veneration. Referring in one of his prayer addresses to the militant cow protectionists' letters, which he had received, Gandhiji reiterated his view that many so-called cow protection societies were really "cow-killing societies". True cow protection meant the acme of generosity, broad-mindedness, tolerance and capacity for self-immolation for the protection of helpless innocence. Yet nowhere in the world were the cow and her progeny more ill-treated and tortured than in "cow-protecting" India. This ill-treatment was worse than slaughter. The British were a nation of beef-eaters, so were all Western nations—some of them huge exporters of beef. But no cow-protection-*walla* regarded them as the "natural enemy of the Hindus". On the contrary, he knew of many people who called themselves Hindus but had no scruple about taking beef-extract imported from England or elsewhere. Thousands of cows were saved during the Khilafat movement, by the voluntary act of the Muslims, whereas communal conflict had actually resulted in more cows being slaughtered:

> It is far better to use our energies to eradicate our own shortcomings than to be picking holes in others. Today the edifice of your own religion is crumbling. If you set right its foundations, the rest will take care of itself. We worship the cow by adorning her person but we rob her calf of the last drop of milk and become stingy when it comes to feeding her properly; and when Mother Cow becomes old and decrepit, we send her to the slaughter house by selling her, or else turn her out of doors to die of starvation. Let anyone challenge the truth of these statements. We are brave only in denunciation of others and complacent in regard to our own failings. Ponder well what I have said today, turn the searchlight inward and you will get the true answer as to who the real enemy of the cow is and against whom your crusading spirit ought to be directed.[26]

6

Though Gandhiji was a great spiritual teacher he did not inculcate any new religion. He only taught how the followers of various faiths could grow into perfection by each living his own in full, and assimilating all the best that was in others. Thus would the dream of peace upon earth and goodwill among men be realised. The era of strife would end and the disrupted human family restored to its pristine

harmony. This could be only upon the basis of equal respect for all religions. His congregational prayer meetings exemplified his acceptance of all religions and equal respect for them all. But that did not satisfy the missionary zeal of some leaders of religion. They tried time and again to show him the light and bring him formally into their fold.

Jamiat-e-Ahmadiya-Islamia, an organisation of Ahmadiya sect of Muslims, invited him to embrace Islam. Towards the close of his stay in Bihar, Jamiat-e-Islam made a similar attempt in a more subtle way. Their representative explained to him that their aim was to bring the Muslims to follow the Koran in its true spirit. Gandhiji was in sympathy with their aims. They invited him to attend their gathering at Patna. This he did gladly. The usual post-prayer address was omitted on the evening of the 26th April. Throughout the fairly long address of the President, there was a veiled suggestion that Islam was the one and only true religion and non-Muslims (including the honoured guest of the evening) should see the promised light! So frequent was the reference to the non-Muslims that it seemed as if the primary object of the function was to show light to them. Gandhiji did not like being harangued. He had agreed to be at the meeting on the understanding that the object was to reform Islam and bring Muslims to practise the Prophet's teachings. But Muslims in Bihar formed only 13 or 14 per cent. of the population. Gandhiji felt it was his duty, as a member of the majority community, to go to them in all humility whenever they invited him.

On the following evening, he referred at his prayer meeting to this visit. Not a word did he utter about his unpleasant experience. It would have exacerbated the already embittered communal feeling. Instead, he shared with the gathering what Dr. Mahmud's secretary had told him, viz. that members of the Jamiat-e-Islam were men of austere, simple habits, with a message of self-purification and self-realisation for the Muslims. Religion, he concluded, was sustained never by the sword but by men of God. Rama, God, or Allah, by whatever name He was invoked, He alone was the true object of worship. He was not won by offerings, except the offerings of noble conduct. Universal love was the essence of Hinduism. It was the only way in which Hinduism or, for that matter any religion could survive.

In a written message to the prayer gathering on the 28th April, he carried the lesson further: "You may be astonished to learn that I continue to receive letters in which I am charged with having compromised the interests of the Hindus by acting as a friend of the Muslims. How can I convince people by words, if sixty years of my public life have failed to demonstrate, that in trying to befriend the Muslims I have only proved myself a true Hindu and have truly served the Hindus and Hinduism? The essence of all true religious teaching is

that one should serve and befriend all and dedicate oneself to God's service through the service of His entire creation without distinction. For God cannot be served apart from His creation. I learnt this in my mother's lap. You may refuse to call me a Hindu. I know no defence. I shall only quote Iqbal's famous lines, *Mazhab nahin sikhata apas men ber rakhana* (religion does not teach us to bear ill-will towards one another). It is easy enough to be friendly towards one's friends. But to befriend those who regard themselves as your enemies is the quintessence of true religion. All the rest is poor barter." At the same prayer meeting he declared:

> My inner voice commands me to consecrate myself to the service of the minorities. It will be a new birth to me when Hindus and Muslims forget their animosity. Where this ordeal will ultimately take me God alone knows. Man can only do his duty and if necessary die in its performance. God is all powerful. He is all in all. We are mere cyphers. . . . It matters little, therefore, whether I am here, at Delhi or elsewhere. I shall go wherever He takes me and wherever I am I shall do His will.

At half past nine at night he went to bed. Owing to tormenting heat he had reduced his food to the barest minimum. As a result he was feeling very weak. Suddenly he remembered that he had not done his day's spinning. Out of consideration for his health his attendants had deliberately refrained from reminding him. But knowingly to miss the daily sacrament was unthinkable. He got out of his bed, completed his daily quota and then went to sleep—his blood pressure very much lowered!

* * *

Gandhiji was a firm believer in a classless, egalitarian society in which there would be no distinctions of rich and poor, high and low. In some respects he went further even than the orthodox Socialists in as much as he would not exempt anyone from obligatory socially useful body-labour. "If a man work not neither shall he eat." He further held that all work—whether physical or intellectual—should carry equal remuneration. But he refused to accept the doctrinaire Socialist approach to current problems. Nor did he believe that society could be retailored by merely "dreaming of systems so perfect that no-one will need to be good". On the contrary he most firmly held that the only way to abolish privilege was to renounce it oneself. His Socialism was derived from his practice of the principle of "Unto this last". The orthodox Socialists questioned his claim but he maintained that he was a better Socialist than they. He had practised Socialism all his life by identifying himself with the poor, the lowliest and the lost, and sharing with

them their handicaps whereas those who called themselves Socialists were content to dream and prate about Socialism, while continuing to live in their old, easy way till "all were converted".

"The ideal of Socialism is not a new discovery," Gandhiji once remarked to one of his companions during his stay in Bihar. "It is to be found in the Gita. It means that we may not own anything beyond our strict requirement but should share equally with all God's creatures the means of subsistence. No big organisation is needed for the realisation of this ideal. Any individual can set about to practise it, beginning with himself. The first thing is to keep no more than what is strictly needed. To have a personal bank account would thus be incompatible with this ideal. Strict, ceaseless watch over one's own life is the first essential. Even a single individual if he enforces this ideal fully in his own person, can leaven the whole society. To become a trustee in the true sense of one's own wealth and talent is true Socialism. But today Socialism has come to mean taking forcible possession of other people's possessions. This is a travesty of true Socialism."

A group of fifteen students came to see Gandhiji some time after. He was at the moment observing his Monday silence. They called themselves Socialists. Gandhiji wrote out replies to their questions on slips of paper. The first step towards Socialism, he scribbled, was to shed sloth and aversion to physical labour. "Now tell me how many of you have servants in your homes?" he asked. They admitted that altogether there was at least one servant in each home. "And you call yourselves Socialists while you make others slave for you!" Gandhiji asked them. "It is a queer kind of Socialism which, I must say, I cannot understand. If you will listen to me, I will say, do not involve yourselves in any ism. Study every ism. Ponder and assimilate what you have read and try to practise yourself what appeals to you out of it. But for heaven's sake, do not set out to establish any ism. The first step in the practice of Socialism is to learn to use your hands and feet. It is the only sure way to eradicate violence and exploitation from society. We have no right to talk of Socialism so long as there is hunger and unemployment and the distinction between high and low amongst us and around us."

He then sketched out for them a basic course in practical Socialism: (1) fold your bedding on getting up in the morning, (2) give a helping hand in preparing and laying out the breakfast, (3) help in dusting and cleaning up the house, (4) wash your own clothes, (5) help your mothers and sisters in cleaning and scrubbing utensils, (6) spin daily to provide yourself with the clothes you need, (7) keep your books and papers neat and tidy, and (8) use a two-anna steel nib in preference to a fifty-rupee-worth fountain-pen.

If they practised Socialism in this way, instead of talking or preaching to others, he concluded, they would create a Socialist society in

their immediate neighbourhood, with themselves as the first converts. "You will not then need to 'convert' anyone to Socialism; your example will do that and, what is more, it will provide a welcome relief to your long suffering parents. You would cease to be a burden on them."

* * *

Gandhiji had a soft corner in his heart for the Congress Socialists. Their programme of establishing a classless society appealed to him very much. He was afraid, however, they were setting about it the wrong way. The first step towards it, in the altered circumstances of the country, was for all to strive to achieve communal and national unity and together work for the good of the whole country. Circumstances had changed and their methods should change with the circumstances. It would not do to stick to their old, obsolete and hackneyed methods of sabotage, class-war and obstructionism which they had followed under British rule.

He warned them that independence by itself would not bring to India a new heaven and a new earth. It would only remove some of the handicaps under which they had previously laboured and thus clear the way for real constructive effort. A group of them came to see him at Delhi on the 27th May, 1947, on the eve of the announcement of the Partition Plan. He told them that if they were serious about establishing a Socialist order, the straightest and quickest way was to settle in the villages among the poor village folk, live as they did, labour with them eight hours a day, use village products only, eradicate illiteracy and untouchability, help the women to raise their own status. "If you are unmarried and want to marry, choose a village girl as your partner." If they did all that with sincerity and honesty of purpose, the leaven of their example would permeate the mass. The same applied to Congressmen also. The Socialists, however, must not forget, he went on to say, that with all its shortcomings the Congress was the one organisation that was truly national. It had not identified itself with any party or group. He was sure if the Socialists drew up a plan of village uplift — not merely a paper plan but one to be worked out—the Congress Government would back them and Pandit Nehru himself would sing their praises. What he found, however, was that they concerned themselves mainly with promoting strikes, when the challenge of communalism stared them in the face and demanded their full attention. Political strikes were all right in the fight against the British but they were quite out of place when directed against their own countrymen. If they wanted to contest power with those who were at the helm, they must give proof of their superior talent, greater self-sacrifice and greater service. On no account must they accentuate existing tensions or create fresh ones. "You have intellect, talent, resourcefulness and patriotism. Give all these to the villages, educate the village people in the true sense of the word, through life-giving

constructive activity before they take the law into their own hands and launch upon the self-destructive path, which would make their and your last state worse than the first." And again: "You may not understand this today but one day, perhaps after I am gone, you will. So long our people were like the dumb and the blind. They allowed themselves to be led by the hand. But if you do not look about, a time will come when no-one will listen to your harangues and you will have to address the empty air. For society cannot subsist on gratuitous sermons; deeds, not words will count."

While the Socialist friends agreed that his programme of constructive work would help in the removal of inequalities, they objected to it on the ground that it would not help to raise the "standard of living" of the people. Gandhiji told them that he shared with them the ideal of raising the standard of living but there were certain limits to it. First things must come first. He was, for instance, a lover of art. He would love to have all children get education in dancing and music. But these should become a part and parcel of their life, not be a mere excrescence. He would, unhesitatingly ban all art and cultural activities so-called that tended to weaken the moral fibre of the people. Similarly he would discourage harmful luxuries and habit-forming drugs by heavy taxation; he would stop all textile and power-driven flour mills and oil presses. But he would see to it that every village produced all its essential requirements, i.e. food, cloth, milk, vegetables and fruit and that everybody had a sufficiency of these. To encourage self-help he would award prizes and trophies, and exempt from certain taxes the villages that might set an example in that respect.

The artificial living of the industrial era, he went on to observe, had sapped the vitality of men and women. By creating abnormalities unknown before it had largely nullified the achievements of science. From his recollections of early childhood he drew an idyllic picture of the women in his home Province of Kathiawad, going to fetch water from the river at sunrise and getting the benefit of the young rays of the morning sun, followed by health-giving toil in the fields, and the grinding of corn in their homes to the strains of devotional hymns, which vitalised their body as well as their soul. Work was joy. It was not drudgery to be relieved by leisure and by the thrills provided by the cinema and the theatre. If he were the Prime Minister of India, and had his way, he added laughing, the only theatre he would give them would be the spinning theatre!

"But who prevents you from becoming the Prime Minister of India?" put in one of them. "If you come forward who is going to oppose you?"

Gandhiji: "You will be the first!"

* * *

The Socialists argued that democracy without Socialism had no

meaning. While sharing with them the ideal of equal distribution of wealth, Gandhiji went a step further. Neither democracy nor Socialism was realisable except in an environment of unadulterated non-violence. He never concealed the sharp contrast between their method and sense of values and his.

Louis Fischer remarked to Gandhiji once when such a discussion was proceeding: "But you are a Socialist and so are they."

Gandhiji answered: "I am, they are not. . . . My claim will live when their Socialism is dead."

"What do you mean by *your* Socialism?"

"I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. In their Socialism these will probably have no place. . . . I want freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius, if I want to. . . . Under the other Socialism there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body or individual will."

"Yes, but there are variations. My Socialism in its modified form means that the State does not own everything."

"Does not under your Socialism, the State own your children and educate them in any way it likes?"

"All States do that."

"Then your Socialism is not different from any other."

"You really object to dictatorship."

"But Socialism is dictatorship or else only arm-chair philosophy."

"Socialists want what you want — a free world. Communists don't."

"Communism, as I have understood it, is the natural corollary of Socialism."

"You are right. There was a time when the two could not be distinguished. But today Socialists are very different from Communists."

"You mean to say, you do not want Communism of Stalin's type."

"But Indian Communists want in India Communism of the Stalin type and want to use your name for that purpose."

"They won't succeed."

* * *

The same distrust of pre-conceived theories and generalisations marked Gandhiji's attitude towards Marxism. After an extensive reading of Marxian literature during his last detention at Poona, he remarked: "I think I could have written Marx better than Marx, provided, of course, I had his scholarship which I do not have. He has the knack of making even simple things appear difficult."

On the fly-leaf of *A Handbook of Marxism* he scribbled: "All for each and each for all." "From each according to his capacity

to each according to his need." This to him was the quintessence of the teaching of Marx. Marxism, however, was not the only way or even the best way of achieving this goal.

I tried to get him to give his appraisal of some aspects of the Marxist philosophy. Taking up the role of *advocatus diaboli*, I asked: Were not the economic interpretation of history and the materialistic theory of knowledge outstanding contributions of Marx to the understanding of social phenomena?

He asked me to explain further. I said, "Marx showed us that our ideologies, institutions, and ethical standards, literature, art, customs, even religion, are a product of our economic environment."

He demurred: "I do not agree that our ideologies, ethical standards and values are altogether a product of our material environment without any absolute basis outside it. On the contrary as we are so our environment becomes."

"Is not the Wardha scheme of Basic education based upon the assumption that purposive activity of the hand moulds not only our thinking but our whole personality? Does that not come very near the materialistic theory of knowledge as propounded by Marx?"

"But the Marxist wants to abolish the labouring hand altogether and substitute in its place the machine. He has no use for the hand. Dependence on manual labour, according to Marx, is the symbol and root cause of the destitution and slavery of the worker. It is the function of the machine to emancipate him from this state. I, on the other hand, hold that machine enslaves and only intelligent use of the hand will bring to the worker both freedom and happiness."

"That is true, but . . ."

Gandhiji continued: "The Marxist regards thought, as it were, 'a secretion of the brain' and the mind 'a reflex of the material environment'. I cannot accept that. Above and beyond both matter and mind is He. If I have an awareness of that living principle within me, no-one can fetter my mind. The body might be destroyed, the spirit will proclaim its freedom. This to me is not a theory; it is a *fact of experience*."

I argued: "The Marxists concede that an individual may transcend his material environment but class behaviour is essentially determined by it. It cannot change unless the economic environment is altered. To transform the capitalist the capitalistic order must be destroyed."

Gandhiji: "What an individual can do, a whole class of people can be induced to do. It is all a question of discovering the right technique. The whole of our non-violent non-cooperation movement, which aims at transforming the British ruling class, is based on this hypothesis. Trusteeship is my answer to the issue of class-conflict."

I passed on to the Marxist doctrine of economic motivation of

history. The wars were an inevitable consequence of the institution of private property in the capitalistic system. Gandhiji rejected the one and disagreed with the other. "No, not the economic factor alone. Ultimately it is the Unseen Power that governs the course of events — even in the minds of men who make those events. Supposing Hitler were to die today, it would alter the whole course of current history. Similarly, supposing all capitalists were wiped out as a result of an earthquake or some other natural cataclysm, the history of class-war would then be changed in a way least dreamt of by the exponents of economic interpretation of history. Would not the history of the present war have been different if instead of Chamberlain a more dynamic figure had been the Prime Minister of England? Or, if Chamberlain had not shown lack of political courage at the last moment?"

"The Marxists say," I interjected, "that to abolish war we have but to abolish the institution of private property. You have also taught that property is incompatible with the non-violent way of life."

Gandhiji: "This is only partly true. Was not Helen of Troy the cause of the Trojan war? Were the wars of the Rajputs related to the institution of private property? No. To banish war we have to do more. We have to eradicate possessiveness and greed and lust and egotism from our own hearts. We have to carry war within ourselves to banish it from society."

I altered my line of argument. "The remedies prescribed by Marx are of course wrong but can we not make use of his diagnosis of the malaise that affects our society for a proper understanding of the problem and devising right remedies for the same? Take, for instance, his views on gradualism; futility of parliamentary action alone for effecting radical changes in society; necessity of direct action; in a sense even his theory of minority dictatorship, odious though it is. You also have taught that small reform kills revolution and non-cooperation is the only remedy when a system, in the sum, is evil and finally, that appeal to reason is not enough unless it is backed by an effective sanction. And has not every reformer in a way necessarily to be a dictator and every reformist institution a dictatorship? Inasmuch as a reformer has to lead, he has to go ahead of the majority; he cannot afford to be led by the majority. How can he submit to majority rule? My point is that Marx knew of only one effective sanction, viz. of violence — force. If only he had been aware of the sanction of non-violence or Satyagraha and its potency, he might have adopted it in place of violence. Even in our own time industry is being changed over from steam to oil and electricity."

Gandhiji: "I have also heard it said that often it is more economical to dispose of the old plant than to try to adapt it from one kind of motive power to another. In the present case, the difference

between violence and non-violence is fundamental. It cuts at the very root of the Marxist theory. If you alter the foundation the whole superstructure will have to be changed."

"I agree. But you have derived non-violence from the Gita. I find a powerful support in the Marxist analysis for your method of non-violent non-cooperation."

Gandhiji: "My interpretation of the Gita is rejected by those who do not believe in Ahimsa and those who are believers in Ahimsa do not need it. Your interpretation will be dubbed un-Marxist by convinced Marxists. It will not appeal to them."

"My quarrel with the Marxists is that even if the paradise of material satisfactions, which they envisage as their final goal, were realised on earth, it would not bring mankind either contentment or peace. But I was wondering whether we cannot take the best out of Marxism and turn it to account for the realisation of our social aims."

After some further discussion Gandhiji said: "You can advance this as your own original thesis on Marx. It might provide a rationale for the practice of Satyagraha to those who lack the spiritual background." But I could not dislodge him from his position that what was good in Marxism was not original or exclusive to it, and what was exclusive to it was not necessarily good." After a while he added: "What has made the teaching of Marx dynamic is that he regarded mankind as a whole and transcending class divisions identified himself with the cause of the poor oppressed toilers of the world. But in that he is not alone. Others besides him have done the same."

He would not concede that Marx had founded an absolute science of society or discovered any laws of social dynamics which *apriori* have an objective validity. The Marxian system was just an attempt to forge a tool for the achievement of a certain goal which Marx held to be desirable.

Finally he said: "We may criticise Marx but that he was a great man who can deny? His analysis of social ills or the cures he prescribed for them may or may not be correct. I do not accept his economic theories but this much I know that the poor are being ground down. Something has got to be done for it. Marx set about to do that in his own way. He had acumen, scholarship, genius."

* * *

William Morris, who worked his way to Socialism through art, has pithily described how mankind would have no use for mere material comforts and leisure if the new order did not at the same time ensure freedom, inner peace, joy of self-expression and harmony to the individual. He regarded body-labour as an aid to the expression of art instead of being an antithesis of art and he abhorred the production of

material goods at the cost of dehumanising labour. He also had the insight to see how in the pursuit of plenty through a State-owned, centralised system of production, the peace and liberty of mankind might be endangered.

> It is necessary to point out [wrote Morris] that there are some Socialists who do not think that the problem of the organisation of life and necessary labour can be dealt with by a huge national centralisation, working by a kind of magic for which no-one feels himself responsible; that on the contrary it will be necessary for the unit of administration to be small enough for every citizen to feel himself responsible for its details and be interested in them; that individual men cannot shuffle off the business of life on the shoulders of an abstraction called the State, but must deal with it in conscious association with each other; that variety of life is as much an aim of true Communism as equality of condition, and that nothing but an union of these two will bring about real freedom; that modern nationalities are mere artificial devices for the commercial war that we seek to put an end to, and will disappear with it; and finally, that art, using that word in its wider and due signification, is not a a mere adjunct of life which free and happy men can do without, but the necessary expression and indispensable instrument of human happiness.

This could very well serve as an authentic description of Gandhiji's own views on Socialism though he had never read *The Earthly Paradise*. The resemblance goes deeper. Morris shared with Gandhiji an abhorrence of war and all violence as a means of achieving Socialism. In fact he clearly hinted that such an attempt is bound to prove self-defeating through the inherent contradiction between the end and the means. "I have a religious hatred to all war and violence," he wrote and added that he had made it his duty "to sow the seed for the goodwill and justice that may make it possible for the next revolution which will be a social one, to work itself out without violence being an essential part of it."

Gandhiji's discussion with the Socialists led to a demand on their part that Gandhiji should give a definitive summing up of his final views on Socialism, suited to Indian conditions and the way it could be realised. This he did in two articles in *Harijan* in July, 1947:

> Socialism is a beautiful word and so far as I am aware in Socialism all the members of society are equal — none low, none high. In the individual body, the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet low because

they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. This is Socialism.

In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee are all on the same level. In terms of religion, there is no duality in Socialism. It is all unity. Looking at society all the world over, there is nothing but duality or plurality. Unity is conspicuous by its absence. . . . In the unity of my conception there is perfect unity in the plurality of designs.

In order to reach this state, we may not look on things philosophically and say that we need not make a move until all are converted to Socialism. Without changing our life we may go on giving addresses, forming parties and hawk-like seize the game when it comes our way. This is no Socialism. The more we treat it as game to be seized, the farther it must recede from us.

Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeros to the one and the first zero will account for ten and every addition will account for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginner is a zero, in other words, no-one makes the beginning, multiplicity of zeros will also produce zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing zeros will be so much waste.

This Socialism is as pure as crystal. It, therefore, requires crystal-like means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalled by cutting off the prince's head, nor can the process of cutting off equalise the employer and the employed. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth. Are not non-violence and truth twins? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. Non-violence is embedded in truth and *vice versa.* Hence has it been said that they are faces of the same coin. Either is inseparable from the other. Read the coin either way — the spelling of words will be different; the value is the same. This blessed state is unattainable without perfect purity. *Harbour impurity of mind or body and you have untruth and violence in you.* (Italics mine).

Therefore, only truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted Socialists will be able to establish a Socialistic society in India and the world.

After describing the nature of the goal and the qualifications that the instruments must possess to reach it, he went on to describe the means. "Truth and Ahimsa must incarnate in Socialism. In order that they can do so, the votary must have a living faith in God."

Mere mechanical adherence to Truth and Ahimsa is likely to break down at the critical moment:

> Hence have I said that truth is God. This God is a living Force. Our life is of that Force. That Force resides in, but is not, the body. He who denies the existence of that great Force, denies to himself the use of that inexhaustible Power and thus remains impotent. He is like a rudderless ship which, tossed about here and there, perishes without making any headway. The Socialism of such takes them nowhere, not to say of the society in which they live.

That raises the double poser: "Are there not Socialists who are believers in God? And if there be any such, why has Socialism not been realised? Conversely, many godly persons have lived before now; why have they not succeeded in founding a Socialist State?"

Gandhiji admits that it is difficult completely to silence these doubts. But he ventures the explanation that perhaps it has never occurred to a believing Socialist that there is any connection between his Socialism and belief in God. Conversely, "it is equally safe to say that godly men as a rule never commended Socialism to the masses. Have not superstitions flourished in the world in spite of godly men?"

Confronted with a current cliche that Socialism can succeed only in a society of angels and when such a society arrives, there will be no need for Socialism left, William Morris replied: "I do not believe in the world being saved by any system — I only assert the necessity of attacking systems grown corrupt."

William Morris had not worked out how this could be done without resorting to methods that are self-defeating. Gandhiji takes up the problem at this point and provides the answer:

> The answer lies in the implicit connection between truth which is God and Satyagraha — the master key to all human problems. The laws of Satyagraha are still being discovered. When they are fully discovered, full Socialism will no longer be an utopia but a firm reality.
>
> The fact is that it has already been a matter of strenuous research to know this great Force and its hidden possibilities. My claim is that in the pursuit of that search lies the discovery of Satyagraha. It is not, however, claimed that all the laws of Satyagraha have been laid down or found. This I do say, fearlessly and firmly, that every worthy object can be achieved by the use of Satyagraha. It is the highest and infallible means, the greatest force. Socialism will not be reached by any other means. Satyagraha can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral.

7

The 29th April was the last day of Gandhiji's stay in Bihar. A couple of days earlier, the two girls of his party had not got up for their morning prayer. It set him thinking. "One may miss anything else but not prayer," he patiently explained to them. "Prayer is the means of self-purification. If we neglect it, dirt, dust and cobwebs will accumulate and make our inner being foul and filthy."

The thought of self-examination was with him during massage also. "What handy means has nature provided to us to test ourselves and check up our failings!" he remarked. Pointing to his masseuse the shadow of her dishevelled hair thrown on the opposite wall by a shaft of light, he added: "Look at the shadow. As the object is, so is the image. All this shows that *as we are, so does the universe around us become. We are the cause and makers of our surroundings; nobody else. To know oneself, to know one's hidden failings and to correct them is the key to setting right one's surroundings.* There must be some flaw in me, in my system of Ashram training, which is responsible for the laxity in the observance of the Ashram rules such as I have witnessed this morning."

Referring to the controversy he had had with some of his colleagues over the question of Brahmacharya, he remarked: "I am surrounded by exaggeration and untruth. In spite of my best efforts to find it, I do not know where truth lies. But it seems to me that I have come nearer to God and truth. It has cost me old friendships but I am not sorry for it. To me it is a sign of my having come nearer to God that I can write and speak to everybody plainly and fearlessly about the delicate issue in the teeth of the fiercest opposition, practise in full the eleven vows which I have professed, without the slightest feeling of perturbation or unrest. Sixty years of striving have at last enabled me to realise the ideal of truth and purity which I have ever set before myself."

In his post-prayer address on the 29th evening, bidding farewell to Bihar, Gandhiji requested the people to show their affection towards him by working for communal unity, not by thronging at railway stations. "At this age I cannot stand the shouting of the crowds. Moreover, I hate to hear *Jai* shouts. They stink in my nostrils when I think that to the shouting of these *Jais*, Hindus massacred innocent men and women, just as the Muslims killed the Hindus to the shouting of *Allah-o-Akbar* (God is great). I know of no greater sin than to oppress the innocent in the name of God."

Part Two

THE BATTLE OF PARTITION

CHAPTER VII

BACK AT THE BASTIONS

1

WHILE GANDHIJI was thus occupied in Bihar, Mountbatten forged ahead with his plans. By the end of his first fortnight in India, he had come to the conclusion that if the transfer of power was to take place in a peaceful way, the League's demand for India's division would have to be conceded and the same logic would have to be applied to the Provinces where the two communities were evenly balanced, viz., the Punjab and Bengal. Peaceful transfer of power would also provide the inducement to the parties to remain within the Commonwealth.

By the middle of April, he was ready with the broad outlines of his plan. He then called a conference of the Governors, as men on the spot, to give him their reactions. Mountbattens's plan, in broad outline, as it stood on the eve of the conference was:

(1) Partition of India, if the Indian parties are agreed on it;

(2) Provinces generally to have freedom to determine their own future;

(3) Bengal and the Punjab to be notionally divided for voting purposes;

(4) Sylhet district in Assam, which had a Muslim majority, to be given the option of joining the Muslim Province created by the partition of Bengal; and

(5) General Elections to be held in the North-West Frontier Province to decide as to which part of India it wished to join.

The fly in the ointment was that in the North-West Frontier Province the Congress Ministry under Dr. Khan Saheb was uncompromisingly opposed to Jinnah's two-nation theory and the League's demand for Pakistan based on that theory. It was too firmly established in the saddle to be dislodged by means that could possibly be made to look constitutional. But any solution that left the Frontier Province out of Pakistan was unacceptable to the League. The Congress, on the other hand, was not prepared to brook any interference with the normal functioning of the Frontier Ministry. It,

therefore, became necessary for the success of the Mountbatten plan to find a constitutional formula which would give to the Muslim League what it wanted while circumventing the Congress objection to interference with the normal functioning of the Frontier Ministry. To clear the way for the Frontier part of his plan, in the last week of April, Mountbatten paid a visit to the Frontier Province. From there he returned to the capital on the 30th April.

To go back a little, Jinnah had, on the 6th April, 1947, in a meeting with Mountbatten demanded a quick "surgical operation". Mountbatten told him that an operation has always to be preceded by an "anaesthetic". The Gandhi-Jinnah signatures to the joint peace appeal of the 14th April, to the exclusion of the Congress President's was his "operation anaesthesia". The League's "Direct Action" campaign nevertheless continued in the Frontier Province. Over this Mountbatten had many a row with Jinnah. Jinnah came out with counter-complaints and put the whole blame on the "bastard situation" in the Province. Mountbatten went even to the extent of telling him that the most effective way to prevent consideration of his "complaints" (not the demand for partition) was for him to permit violence to continue. Time and again Jinnah promised that he would do his best to stop violence but no concrete action followed. Since Jinnah could neither be persuaded nor bypassed, it was decided to try to remove the cause of the Muslim League's exasperation, if possible, by persuading the Khan Saheb Ministry to resign. But Dr. Khan Saheb refused to oblige. Mountbatten had consequently to fall back upon the general election in the Frontier. And so on the 1st May, Lord Ismay left for London with Mountbatten's draft plan to finalise it in consultation with His Majesty's Government. With him went George Abell.

Mountbatten had an alternative line. It was to resurrect the Cabinet Mission plan in modified form on Dominion Status basis. Its essence was to bring together representatives of "Hindustan and Pakistan" to "negotiate at the Centre on a basis of parity". This would remove the Muslim League's objection that under the Cabinet Mission plan, at the Centre, they would "perpetually be outvoted by the Hindu majority". It would, further, obviate the difficulties attendant upon the partition of Bengal and the Punjab — including the thorny Sikh question — and preserve a semblance of Indian unity.

This of course was nothing like the original Cabinet Mission plan, as understood and accepted by the Congress. The Congress had no use for a Union in which the minority would enjoy in perpetuity power of veto over the majority and which would lack even the possibility of ever developing into a fullfledged democratic system. It would render the country internally weak and externally impotent. The Congress leaders found themselves confronted by a dilemma.

It rendered a consultation with Gandhiji necessary.

Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji 23rd April, 1947

You know that the Congress Working Committee is meeting here on the 1st of May. I should very much like you to be here about that time. The first week of May is likely to see the formulation of Mountbatten's scheme for the future. This is obviously important and will shape our future. His intention is to have a rough framework ready by then — to discuss this in detail and then finalise it after reference to the British Government. He expects to get through all these processes by the 3rd week of May. According to this programme, the first week of May will be of considerable importance and all of us would like you to be near us for advice and guidance. I hope, therefore, that you will be able to come here then.

* * *

After Mr. Attlee's declaration of 20th February, 1947, fixing the deadline for British withdrawal, when the Muslim League had launched its campaign of "Direct Action" for the capture of power in the Provinces which it demanded for Pakistan, Major Wyatt, who came to India as one of the secretaries to the Cabinet Mission, wrote in *The New Statesman and Nation* that the British should declare "unequivocally" that complete authority could not be handed over to any Provincial Government in a Province where the minority amounted to nearly half the total population. Such a declaration, he observed, would "quickly disillusion the Muslim League of the belief that they could capture the whole of Bengal and the Punjab through the good offices of the British, and it would probably come to realise that its demand for Pakistan was no longer worthwhile." If the Government were not willing to define such a course of action in the near future, Major Wyatt warned, "*a civil war and mass terror would be the position for the second half of* 1948." (Italics mine).

R. G. Casey's was another warning voice. That one-time Governor of Bengal, wrote in his book *An Australian in India*, published in London in March, 1947: "I realise very well, a solution of the problem of Muslims of India has got to be found. *But I am sure Pakistan is not the solution*. . . . I do not believe, differences between the two communities are so great — or perhaps I should say so permanently great — as to require the partition of India between them in order to solve the problem. Anyhow, I am convinced that it would not solve the problem. . . . If India is once split, it will take generations to heal the breach again." (Italics mine).

The creation of Pakistan, Casey went on to say, might solve one

minority problem — at least on paper — but only at the expense of creating other minority problems "only just less real" than the one that would be solved:

> It would result in something like 80 million of non-Muslim (mainly Hindu) population being placed at the mercy of a Muslim-dominated Government. While Mr. Jinnah claims the right for Muslim majority areas to secede from the rest of India, he denies the efficacy of safeguards for the Muslims of India generally as any substitute for Pakistan. The Hindus in Pakistan must be content with something that is not good enough for Muslims in India. . . . The principal motive behind Pakistan is economic. . . . Mr. Jinnah and the leaders of the Muslim League understand all this . . . although they . . . speak in terms of two races. . . . The only way that the Muslims can advance themselves economically is to achieve education and to learn how to compete successfully with the Hindus, which means a vast amount of hard work and the passage of time. It cannot be achieved quickly or by political means.

Since each side would have a "formidable body of hostages" in the other camp, Casey proceeded, "It would not be unreasonable to suppose that if there were to be discriminating treatment by the Muslims against the Hindus in Pakistan, this would be quickly followed by reprisals against the Muslims in the Hindu-majority areas. One thing might very well lead to another . . . and competition in discrimination might well result, with unfortunate and unpleasant results for both sides." There was the definite possibility, therefore, Casey concluded, that "Pakistan might result in the lowest common denominator of content for the Caste Hindu population of Pakistan and for the Muslim population of Hindustan."

H. N. Brailsford, the eminent British publicist and writer, in an article in *The New Statesman and Nation*, referred to the proposal for the division of India as "a reactionary step which no-one welcomes outside the ranks of the Muslim League." He then went on to say: "It throws away the chief boon of political and economic unity which British rule had brought to the people of India. . . . But the chief reason why most of us dislike the idea of Pakistan is that it implies a reversion to some medieval conception of theocracy. . . . Muslim masses had been led to a wrong turning in the road towards emancipation. Their needs are the same as those of their Hindu neighbours."

Observed the *Manchester Guardian* in an editorial on the 3rd May: "Pakistan is a very high price to pay for peace — or at least avoidance of civil war." A few days later it again wrote that while evidently there were "serious objections to every conceivable solution, the simplest solution would be that favoured by Mr. Gandhi and

Mr. Patel — that we should transfer our powers and responsibility to Pandit Nehru's Government, to make it responsible to the Constituent Assembly, leaving it to settle with the Muslim League the question of partition or no partition."

On the 6th May, Fenner Brockway, M. P., in a statement from London said that India's internal differences were of primary importance to the Indian people and could be adjusted by themselves. "For the British Parliament to try to guide or control their decision *would betray an over-anxiety far more likely to increase the difficulties than to remove them*." (Italics mine). The British Government could give more effective help by showing full confidence in them. To do this effectively, the British Government should first treat the Interim Government — till full power was transferred by June, 1948 — "as a *de facto* independent Government with full powers in which the Viceroy's place shall correspond to that of the Governor-General in any of the Dominions" and, secondly, to make it indisputably clear "that the Constituent Assembly, membership of which is open to all sections of the people, is fully empowered to decide the future form of India's Government of all Provinces."

Major-General Sir Dashwood Strettell, who had served in various capacities in the Indian army for 44 years, was even more outspoken. Writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, he observed that the decision about fixing the date of transfer of power was "probably correct" but the method of handing over control would "encourage the Muslim League's intransigence". He suggested that "the only way to cut the Gordian knot" was for the Cabinet to say that they would hand over Government to those elected by the Constituent Assembly and thus force the Muslim League to join. His letter, he said, was intended to give the British public "the straight facts" about India because, "in our anxiety to plead the cause of the minorities, the public have been given a very euphemistic picture of the Muslim League."

Sardar Patel in his forthright fashion declared that the British policy of remaining neutral but holding on to power was just the way to promote civil war. "There would be peace in the country within a week" if power were transferred to the Central Government "as it now stands."[1] Functioning of the Indian Interim Government as a Dominion Government with the Viceroy standing out would immediately put a stop to acts of violence, as with Dominion functions, the Central Government would form a strong Centre and would have the necessary power to put down disorder. "Lacking interference by a third party to whom either side could appeal, the Congress and the Muslim League would settle their differences at once. If there were conflicts in the Cabinet over any question, the majority would rule. . . . The Congress position has always been that it will not coerce any group or area which does not want to remain in the Union. . . .

We asked him (Jinnah) to refer the question to the United Nations' Organisation. He said 'No'. We asked him to arbitrate. He said 'No'."

In spite of these clear warnings, advice and alternatives to the vivisection of India — not only for the sake of the peace and progress of this sub-continent but even for the ultimate good of the Indian Muslims themselves — before the British Government, their overconcern for the minorities, to which General Strettell and Fenner Brockway had referred, and which Gandhiji had earlier described as a new phase of the old British imperialist tradition, prevailed, and a situation was allowed to develop which proved compelling for all parties, including Lord Mountbatten, and the disintegration of India's unity was decided upon by the British power even against their own better judgment, not unaccompanied by the proverbial "bitter tear" of the Walrus in Lewis Carroll's classic.

They neither themselves governed nor let others govern. The issue of the Muslim League nominees continuing in the Interim Government was never squarely faced. The law and order situation consequently deteriorated at such a rate that, in a speech before the London Royal Empire Society, Lord Ismay made this admission that whereas before coming to India he had felt that the deadline of June, 1948, for the completion of the British evacuation of India was "far too early", upon his arrival in India he began to feel that it was almost "too late". The machinery of administration was creaking, and "the communal bitterness was far more intense both at headquarters in Delhi and in the Provinces than anything I could have imagined."

Lord Ismay, in the course of the same speech, unfeelingly observed that never in history had there been "a coalition so determined not to cooperate with each other" as in the Interim Government at the Centre. What he conveniently omitted to mention was that it was the British power itself that had forced that impossible situation upon India in the teeth of the nationalist opposition of not only Congressmen but large sections of non-Congressmen as well — in fact almost all sections outside the Muslim League.

To be sure, the situation was not of Lord Mountbattens's doing or seeking or liking. The only alternative solution for making the Government work in the circumstance was to adopt Gandhiji's plan (see page 79) of which both the New Delhi officialdom and the Muslim League were so suspicious and which, partly on that account, the Congress had turned down. The best that he could do, Mountbatten felt, was to hasten the transference of power in terms of his mandate by securing some sort of agreement among the Indian parties. In this he achieved a brilliant success. It was a unique triumph of the Mountbatten diplomacy, but was it a triumph of Mountbatten's mission?

This much, however, one can say in retrospect that in the interplay of historical forces which in this great drama reduced almost everybody to a mere puppet of his circumstances, Mountbatten played his part with consummate skill. He could act only according to his light and Gandhiji, who asked and expected nothing more of anybody, was content to have it at that.

Indian leaders were even grateful for the way Mountbatten ultimately managed things. Theirs, however, was the gratitude of men which, as an English poet laureate has sung, had often left him mourning.

In the second week of November, 1947, Sardar Patel, in the course of a speech at Nagpur before the representatives of Chhatisgarh State, referred to some of the behind-the-scenes goings-on which had brought about his conversion to the partition idea. Bastar State in the Eastern States Agency had immense natural resources. When the Sardar took over charge of the States portfolio in the Interim Government, he found that the officials of the Political Department were actually on the point of mortgaging these to the Nizam on a long lease. He put his foot down and sent for the relevant papers. Incredible as it may seem, the Political Department first refused. When compelled ultimately to produce them, they tried to brazen it out by saying that as they were, under the law, guardians of the minor Prince of Bastar, they were competent to enter into the contract. They were bluntly told that as they were going away, they need not "bother about their wards". The Sardar went on to say:

> It was then that I was made fully conscious of the extent to which our interests were being prejudiced in every way by the machinations of the Political Department, and came to the conclusion that the sooner we were rid of these, the better for us. I came to the conclusion that the best course was to hasten the departure of these foreigners even at the cost of the partition of the country. It was also then that I felt that there was one way to make the country safe and strong, and that was the unification of the rest of India.

On the 25th November, 1948, the Sardar again reverted to the theme in the course of another speech at the Benares Hindu University: "I felt that if we did not accept partition, India would be split into many bits and would be completely ruined. My experience of office for one year had convinced me that the way we had been proceeding would lead us to disaster. We would not then have had one Pakistan but several. There would have been Pakistan cells in every office."

In November, 1949, speaking in the Constituent Assembly, he gave further details which showed how effectively the two trump cards

which the British had kept to themselves, till the very last, had been played to force the hands of the Indian leaders to barter their cherished ideal of Indian unity for an early transfer of power. Of these the first was the reserve powers and control over the services; the second was Paramountcy in relation to the Indian States. "You have seen what was happening in the Punjab. In the five districts where havoc was being wrought, five British officers were in power and nothing could be done. I tried to get the District Magistrate of Gurgaon transferred. I could not succeed, and the British officer there arrested leading Congressmen when they were not at fault and put them in jail as hostages. He had the cheek to write on the application presented to him by the President of the Bar Association for their release, as they were innocent, that they were being kept as hostages! I was shocked. . . . I asked him, 'Have you arrested people as hostages?' He said, 'No, who told you?' Fortunately, I had the document with me on which he had made that endorsement. I showed him the endorsement. He asked, 'How did you get this?' I said, 'That is not the question. Is this your endorsement or not?' After that I tried hard, I wrote to the then Governor of the Punjab, I pleaded with the Viceroy, but I found it difficult to remove him and you know the havoc that was played in Gurgaon and these other districts. It was not in the Punjab alone; in other places also many such things were done. It was a time of touch and go and we would have lost India. Then we insisted that we had come to a stage when power must be transferred immediately, whatever happened and then we decided to resign. It was at that time that Lord Mountbatten came. . . . I agreed to Partition as a last resort, when we had reached a stage when we would have lost all. We had five or six members in the Government, the Muslim League members — they had already established themselves as members who had come to partition the country. At that stage we agreed to Partition; we decided that Partition could be agreed upon the terms that the Punjab should be partitioned . . . that Bengal should be partitioned. . . . Mr. Jinnah did not want a truncated Pakistan but he had to swallow it. . . . *I made a further condition that in two month's time power should be transferred and* an Act should be passed by Parliament in that time, if it was guaranteed that *the British Government would not interfere with the question of the Indian States.* We said, 'We will deal with that question; leave it to us; you take no sides. Let Paramountcy be dead.'" (Italics mine).

On the other hand, failure of "Direct Action" in the Punjab had a sobering effect on the Muslim League High Command. If they persisted in their intransigence, the only areas they could possibly hope to include in Pakistan at the end of June, 1948, would be Sind, Bengal and Baluchistan. The case of the Punjab was problematical

since it was under the Governor's rule, and in the North-West Frontier Province the only way the League could improve its position was through the dismissal of the Khan Saheb Ministry by the Governor and holding of fresh elections. Neither was possible without British goodwill as that Ministry still commanded a secure majority in the Provincial Legislature. Confronted with this prospect, Jinnah, it seems, became resigned to a "moth-eaten, truncated Pakistan". If the League agreed to the partitioning of the Punjab and Bengal, the British power might agree to its demand for a re-election in the Frontier Province or some alternative device which would give it its only chance of annexing that Province to Pakistan.

A situation was thus created in which both the parties were prepared to submit to a plan which neither wholly liked but which neither was in a position to resist and India was partitioned with the consent of the very men who had denounced partition as a trick devised in the interests of British imperialism to keep India divided and weak.

A picture of the situation confronting the Congress High Command at this juncture is furnished by the following excerpts from a despatch from the Delhi representative of a Calcutta daily which appeared in the second week of May, 1947:

> My reading of the situation . . . is that Delhi may soon be the centre of "direct action" on the lines of what was recently witnessed in the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province. . . . The Communications Department of the Government of India has lost no time in completely Muslimising all important posts in the higher cadre of the Delhi telephone system by replacing the European, Hindu and Sikh officers with Muslims. . . . All strategic and key posts have been placed in the charge of Muslim officers so that in case of an emergency like what the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province have recently passed through, communications by means of telephone between the different parts of Delhi itself and also between Delhi and other parts of India through the trunk exchange may be absolutely under their control.

Key positions in Police, Information and Defence besides, were under the dispensation of "elementary justice" (see Vol. I, page 268) held by Muslims or pro-Muslim League partisans. Among the portfolios held by the League nominees in the Interim Government was that of Finance. The Congress had parted with it when the League came into the Interim Government in order to be able to retain, besides Home and Defence, the more glamorous but perhaps (at that stage) not half so important portfolio of External Affairs. It enabled

the League to create more headaches for the Congress High Command than the latter had ever thought possible.

Fresh evidence of wide ramifications of the intrigues of the Muslim League and its supporters all over the country kept pouring in. Some commandos, who had been working behind the Japanese lines in Burma under Brigadier Wyngate, were found engaged in disruptive activity. How they infiltrated into India was a mystery. Brisk, illegal traffic in arms was going on not without the connivance and sometimes active cooperation of British and Indian military officers. It had grown into an open scandal. Secret dumps of illegal arms, including, in one instance, over a thousand Sten guns, were discovered at Nagpur, Jubbulpore, Kanpur, and several other places. Later, the Congress High Command had documentary evidence of the complicity of the Political Department; how in league with certain Princes it was busy hatching a conspiracy to break up India's unity. Among other things, it brought to light a well-laid plan to run in large supplies of arms through some of the States to organise a D-day all over India. In the face of all this, Congress leadership, to quote Pandit Nehru, became at last willing "to cut off the head in order to get rid of the headache!"

* * *

Gandhiji discussed the situation for over an hour with Pandit Nehru on his arrival at Bhangi Colony from Patna on the 1st May. He was firmly of the view that the Congress must not engage in the game of diplomacy with the British to score an advantage over the League. In no case should they barter India's unity for any concession at British hands but should instead demand that the British should abandon their middle-of-the-road policy and play straight, strictly enforce the rule of law throughout the country pending the transfer of power, and refuse to have parleys with a party that was remiss in that respect or refused to cooperate; and if the British were unwilling, to go out of the game and bide their time till they would quit, leaving the Indian parties to settle it among themselves.

But the Congress High Command were afraid that if matters were allowed to drift, they would be overwhelmed by the forces of chaos and disruption which in the meantime were building up. The Congress High Command's argument of the "lesser evil" did not appeal to Gandhiji. He pointed out to them that Jinnah's declaration that the minorities in Pakistan would be fully protected was being honoured more in the breach than the observance. It was incumbent upon the British power to denounce the guilty party, but for that they were not ready, which made their *bona fides* suspect in his eyes. If the Congress accepted the logic of partition, it would ultimately lead

to conflict and the disintegration of India for which generations to come would have to pay the price.[2]

In the course of his prayer address the same evening, Gandhiji observed that in his opinion both the honour of the Viceroy, who was instrumental in bringing about the joint appeal, and of Jinnah was involved in it. It was not open to Jinnah to plead that his followers did not listen to his appeal. It would cut the whole ground from under his feet because he was the undisputed President of the All-India Muslim League, and the League claimed to represent the vast bulk of the Muslim population. Where was the authority of the League if the Muslims resorted to violence for gaining its political aim which was summed up in the word Pakistan? Was the British Government to yield to the force of arms rather than the force of reason? The Viceroy had solemnly declared that nothing would be yielded to force. There was no meaning in issuing the joint appeal unless it was certain that it meant for both the signatories all that the words thereof conveyed:

> May I ask the Viceroy why he is a silent witness of all this? Why does he not hold me or Jinnah Saheb, whoever is remiss in the implementation of the joint appeal, to account? And if the British cannot make the Hindus and Muslims to live at peace with one another, why do they not retire leaving them to square it out among themselves?

But even if the British did not leave, he went on to say, the answer would not be to take up the sword. "You are greatly mistaken if you think the British will yield anything to force. And that should be an object lesson for you, too. If you learn to die to the last man, no-one can take anything from you by force."

During his meeting with Lord Mountbatten on the 3rd May, he took up the matter with him. The Viceroy refused to accept the implication which Gandhiji had put upon Mountbatten's having invited both him and Jinnah to issue the peace appeal; both the signatories had freely and willingly signed it. Nor was he prepared to apportion responsibility for the continuation of the disturbances and name the guilty party. At that stage it would serve no useful purpose, he said. His only concern was to transfer power in a peaceful manner to Indian hands as quickly as possible. He was most anxious that India should be united. It would not redound to the credit either of Britain or of India if communal strife continued. If strife continued in spite of his best endeavours during the period of the liquidation of the British power, he finally assured Gandhiji, he would not hesitate to have recourse to the use of the military. Gandhiji felt that was enough for the time being.

On his return from the meeting with the Viceroy he remarked at the evening prayer gathering that the Viceroy was a famous naval commander. "And while, as such, he does not believe in non-violence, he repeatedly assured me that he believes in God and always tries to act according to his conscience." The people should, therefore, forget the past, believe in the new Viceroy's honesty of intentions and not place obstacles in his way.

The crisis was thus for the time being surmounted. But it revealed a deep fissure between their respective lines of approach. A little incident that took place in the first week of April, 1947, high-lighted this. The tide of lawlessness was sweeping over the Punjab. There was a recrudescence of violence in Noakhali. Gandhiji desired Lord Mountbatten to advise him about going to the Punjab in response to the pressing letters he was having from friends there: "Pandit Nehru agrees. Nevertheless I would like you to guide me."[3] And again: "This outbreak of violence is not a mere detail. *If it cannot be dealt with now, it won't be fourteen months hence.*"[4] (Italics mine). To this the Viceroy replied: "I quite agree that these outbreaks are not a mere detail. *What we have to secure is a settlement between the parties at the Centre and, if possible, a combined front against violence.*"[5] (Italics mine).

The divergence persisted till the end. The policy of trying to please both parties continued and with that the phantom hunt for a "combined front" with the perpetrator of violence to bring violence under control while the death roll mounted up, converting the country into a vast powder magazine.

2

The Working Committee of the Congress met on the evening of 1st May. Gandhiji did not evince much interest in it. The divergence between his point of view and that of the rest of the Committee, he felt, was so great that his participation in the discussions could not serve any useful purpose. But the members of the Working Committee were loath to do without him and so he agreed to attend.

The operative part of the Working Committee's decision accepting the principle of partition was contained in the following letter from Pandit Nehru to the Viceroy:

> In regard to the proposals which, I presume, Lord Ismay is carrying with him to London, our Committee are prepared to accept the principle of partition, based on self-determination applied to definitely ascertained areas. This involves the partition of Bengal and the Punjab. As you know, we are passionately attached to the idea of a United India, but we have accepted the parti-

> tion of India in order to avoid conflict and compulsion. In order to give effect to this partition, every effort should be made to meet the wishes and the interests of the people affected by it. Even before and apart from such partition, recent events have made an administrative division of both Bengal and the Punjab an obvious and urgent necessity.[6]

Pandit Nehru went on to observe: "Any proposal to put an end to a duly constituted Provincial Government having a large majority at its command, and to hold elections as a result of terrorism must be considered a surrender and must be resisted." This referred obviously to the Frontier part of the plan. The plan had been discussed with the Congress leaders in general terms only, its text had not been shown to them. The hint conveyed in Pandit Nehru's letter contained in it the seeds of a major political crisis. (See Chapter XII).

Even now Gandhiji did not agree that partition was the only solution or that they must accept it for fear of chaos. As early as March, 1947, he had expressed his view in this regard in a message to *Cavalcade*, the British news magazine. Being asked his reaction to the decision of British withdrawal by June, 1948, he had then replied that no organic peace was possible without complete independence, including the withdrawal of British troops and influence from India. Imposed peace could only disturb human relations:

> Hence establishment of organic peace in India inevitably involves senseless strife. . . . This will end quicker when no party is able to look to British power for protection. Forced emasculation of a great nation was bound to have this sad result. No doubt much will depend on Indian wisdom for minimising mischief. While connection dissolves, honesty and sagacity of British statesmen and British residents in India are equally necessary. I must regretfully say that distrust of British statements and promises has gone too deep and that perhaps legitimately. Therefore, British dealings have to be strictly frank and above suspicion at this critical moment.

In his own mind Gandhiji was quite convinced that there need be no chaos if the British rulers and the British higher officials honestly and sincerely played the game. But supposing that the worst came to the worst and he had to choose between chaos, which the retiring British might let loose in their wake, and an imposed peace he would, he said, unhesitatingly choose chaos. *In no circumstance would he accept partitioning of the country at British hands as the price of peace.*

The Congress High Command were not prepared for that. The

dauntless courage which characterised their outlook during the non-cooperation and civil disobedience days, when their reliance was on the power of suffering alone, had become a thing of the past with increasing reliance on the power that office gave.

The witness to the essential soundness of Gandhiji's view came from an unexpected source. In the third week of May, Sir F. E. James, the former representative of the European community in the Central Legislative Assembly from Madras, publicly stated in London, that *with no third party to complicate matters, after June*, 1948 *—albeit with the best of intentions—the unification of the country would follow sooner or later.* "The collective personality of India will assert itself, and while preserving and protecting its diverse and separate elements will bring to life a Union which will enable India's industry and genius to make its unique contribution to peace, progress and stability of the world."[7]

"Is the communal division of India inevitable?" Reuter's special correspondent Doon Campbell had posed this question a fortnight earlier on the 5th May. "Personally," replied Gandhiji, "I have always said 'no' and I say 'no' even now."

"Do you subscribe to the opinion that the British will be *morally* obliged to stay on in India if the outstanding Hindu-Muslim differences have not been resolved by June, 1948?" he was next asked.

This provided Gandhiji the first indication of the insidious build-up that had for some time been taking place silently behind the scenes. At one time even Lord Mountbatten, it seems, had not ruled out that possibility, provided "the Indian parties" invite the British power to remain, though he regarded this to be a "most unlikely contingency."[8]

If that was the way the wind blew, it was bad business. Gandhiji made it clear that the British withdrawal — "noblest act of the British nation", as he had called it—if it was intended to be honestly and fully carried out, must take place according to schedule, irrespective of internal conditions:

> It would be a good thing if the British were to go today—thirteen months means mischief to India. I do not question the nobility of the British declaration, I do not question the sincerity of the Viceroy, but facts are facts. Neither the British Cabinet nor the Viceroy, however outstanding he may be, can alter facts. And the facts are that India has been trained to look to the British power for everything. Now, it is not possible for India to take her mind off that state all of a sudden.
>
> I have never appreciated the argument that the British want so many months to get ready to leave. During that time all parties will look to the British Cabinet and the Viceroy. . . . That being

so, the thirteen months' stay of the British power and British arms is really a hindrance rather than a help, because everybody looks for help to the great military machine they have brought into being. That happened in Bengal, in Bihar, in the Punjab and in the North-West Frontier Province. The Hindus and Muslims said in turn: "Let us have the British troops." It is a humiliating spectacle.

I have often said before but it does not suffer in value through repetition, because every time I repeat it, it gains force: *the British will have to take the risk of leaving India to chaos or anarchy.* This is so because there has been no Home Rule; it has been imposed on the people. And when you voluntarily remove that rule, there might be no rule in the initial state. It (ordered rule) might have come about if we had gained victory by the force of arms. The communal feuds you see here are, in my opinion, partly due to the presence of the British. *If the British were not here, we would still go through the fire no doubt. But that fire would purify us.* (Italics mine).

The correspondent probed deeper. What sort of Indo-British relationship did he envisage after June, 1948? he asked. Unambiguous and clear came the rejoinder. Gandhiji envisaged the friendliest relationship between Britain and India, assuming that a complete withdrawal took place "with complete honesty behind it—no mental reservations of any kind whatsoever." He felt, in fact, that on the manner of the quitting depended not only the peace of India but also the peace of the world.

In answer to a further question whether he believed that the United Nations Organisation, as at present constituted, could maintain a lasting peace, he replied that he was afraid the world was heading towards another showdown. "*But if all goes well with India, the world may have a long peace. It will largely depend on . . . British statesmanship.*" (Italics mine).

On the following day Aruna Asaf Ali and Asoka Mehta, the Socialist leaders, called upon Gandhiji. Gandhiji greatly esteemed the Congress Socialists for their daring, courage and patriotic fervour. If he could take them along with him the whole way as disciplined soldiers of non-violence and they measured up to his expectations, "one more fight to resist partition might still be given and the dream of India's independence unblighted by division realised.

Socialists: "Is there any alternative to Pakistan?"

Gandhiji: "The only alternative to Pakistan is undivided India. There is no *via media.* Once you accept the principle of partition in respect of any Province, you get into a sea of difficulties. By holding fast to the ideal of undivided India, you steer clear of all difficulties."

Socialists: "Then why does not Congress give a clear lead?"

Gandhiji: "Because it feels helpless. It is not in favour of division. But it says, and with perfect logic, that if Pakistan is to be conceded, justice should be done to non-Muslim majority areas of Bengal and the Punjab, and to the Sikhs, and these Provinces should be partitioned on the same principle on which the Muslim League demands the partition of India. I do not agree with that view. In my opinion, *the Congress should in no circumstance be party to partition. We should tell the British to quit unconditionally.* If they do not listen and partition the country in spite of us, we shall know what to do. Why should we make ourselves accessary to what we hold to be evil?"

Socialists: "In other words, you think that the British power need not stay on in India for another thirteen months?"

Gandhiji: "Quite so. If their intention is perfectly honest, they should not bother as to what would happen to the country after them. The country is quite capable of taking care of itself. They can quit with a clear conscience."

Socialists: "The Congress leaders have said that the British cannot go away without bringing about a settlement between the Congress and the League."

Gandhiji: "Supposing no agreement can be arrived at between the Congress and the League even after thirteen months, would that be a 'reason' for them to stay on in India even after that date? I, therefore, say: *Let them quit now, otherwise their going even after thirteen months will be problematical.*"

Socialists: "But if they go, to whom are they to hand over power?"

Gandhiji: "They can hand over power either to the Muslim League or to the Congress, I do not mind which. If they hand it over to the Congress, the Congress will come to a just settlement with the League. But even if they make it over to the League, the Congress has nothing to fear. Only let the transfer of power be complete and unqualified. The way they do it will provide a test of their sincerity and honesty. So far the British have said that they have yielded to Congress non-violence; it was because of the non-violent struggle launched by the Congress that the Cabinet Mission was sent and the British Government made its famous declaration to withdraw from India. If this is really so, they should have no difficulty in handing over power to the Congress. But so far as I, for one, am concerned, they are free to ignore the Congress and hand over power to the League. They will then have bowed before the power of violence. For that is what the League swears by. We shall then pitch our non-violence even against League's violence. Non-violence was meant not to give fight to the British only. It is ubiquitous in its application and scope. We shall settle with the League by offering our innocent blood to be spilt without spilling any and we will succeed."

Socialists: "Your position is perfectly logical and consistent. You said in 1942 that the British power should withdraw immediately and unconditionally. You have not changed. We are wholly with you there. But a considerable section among Congressmen today has begun to think in terms of collaboration with the British power."

Gandhiji: "You are right. I have not changed. I would change only if I saw my mistake. But I see none. On the contrary, with every fresh experience I am becoming firmer and firmer in my views."

Socialists: "What is your attitude on the States question."

Irrespective of the Congress policy, Gandhiji told them, he had hitherto been in favour of the preservation of the States. But his attitude in that regard had stiffened of late. The British had allowed the States to exist on their sufferance. In certain matters they kept them completely under their thumb while they gave them free rein in others to serve their selfish ends. They were in honour bound to settle the question of the States before leaving. It would be a gross betrayal to leave that question to be decided after independence. For instance, could the Nizam be free to follow a policy antagonistic to India, or to set up ordnance factories or factories for the manufacture of heavy armour within his dominion? "We do not wish the destruction of the Princes. Let them by all means live, but only as servants of their people. . . . If the British are not insincere, they should withdraw from the whole of India including the States, leaving the map of India unchanged."

Socialists: "What is our duty?"

Gandhiji: "If you agree with my analysis, you and those over whom you have influence should join me in preparing the atmosphere for non-violence in the country. I would love to have you with me in that."

Socialists: "The whole country is with you."

Gandhiji: "In a sense, yes. But I suppose, 'the whole country' includes you also. Now tell me how many of you are with me? Is Aruna with me? Are Asoka and Achyut with me? No, you are not. The Congress is not. So I am left to plough my lonely furrow and I am content so to do. If you decide to launch forth with me, I shall take it to mean that you have pledged yourselves to die without killing, abjured the doctrine that the end justifies the means. I have admiration for what Jayaprakash, Aruna, Achyut and others did in 1942. They thought nothing of playing with their lives. I have paid tribute to their fearlessness and courage. But you will now have to cultivate the higher courage which dying without killing calls for. In that campaign sabotage can have no place. You may not agree but it is my conviction that if the Bihar masses had not had the lesson which they had at your hands in 1942, the excesses which Bihar witnessed last year would never have occurred. To me it is little consolation that

those who sponsored the sabotage programme did not themselves directly participate in violence. They should have known that once the evil spirit of violence is unleashed, by its inherent nature it cannot be checked or even kept within any prescribed limits. All violence inevitably tends to run to excess. Therefore, I repeat, and I shall continue to repeat with my last breath, that it is for us to inculcate among the people the spirit of innocent suffering and self-sacrifice only without any evasion into or truck with its opposite.

"I am proceeding to Calcutta. Some people are trying to dissuade me from going there. They say things there are worse even than in Noakhali, that there I shall be faced by ruffians who understand nothing. I tell them, that is the very reason why I want to go there. If in the course of it death comes, I shall welcome it. What better use can there be for this body that has already weathered seventy-eight winters? My death will immediately stop the fratricide.

"If you cast in your lot with me, I shall call every one of you, top-rankers, to defy death with me. I own no party. But you will then be *my* party. Long before you were born I was a Socialist. You are arm-chair Socialists. Your ideal is to provide a motor car and a bungalow to everybody in India. Till that happens, you will continue to live as at present, without sacrificing any of your comforts. I, on the other hand, believe in putting myself on a level with the poorest and the least here and now. My Socialism is not of today. I began to live Socialism while I was still in South Africa. Even then many laborite Socialists so-called used to come to me with their bedraggled ties of dirty-red to invite me to join their ranks. But they remained to join mine instead. For they saw that true Socialism can be based only on non-violence.

"If you tell me that non-violence is your ultimate goal, but in order to realise it you have to make use of violent means, because in this matter-of-fact world there is no other way, I shall say you are labouring under a great delusion. Cannot even Jinnah, that way, claim to be a votary of non-violence, for in Islam it is clearly laid down that anyone who oppresses the weak is no Muslim? But see where this has taken historical Islam. Once you open the flood-gates of violence, you cannot control it. You will be borne away before its onrushing tide. I have, therefore, one and only one thing to say to you: Carry to its ultimate conclusion the fearlessness which characterised you in 1942. Now is the time and the hour. If you let it slip away, it may never return. By learning the art of dying without killing you can mould India's destiny. There is no other way."

But the Socialist friends were at that time deep under the spell of their philosophy of "neo-non-violence" or sabotage. It appealed to their youthful exuberance. They admired the dauntless fighter in Gandhiji but the call to self-discipline, which his method of warfare

involved, left them cold. They picked out of his remarks just what suited their combative mood.

Socialists: "Can we sum up your position by saying that the British should quit immediately and unconditionally, leaving India to God?"

Gandhiji: "You may put it that way. And if in the result there is chaos, that should not frighten us. We shall emerge from the ordeal all the stronger."

But he felt sad at heart. Just as at the time of the Noakhali disturbances he had found in the case of the Chittagong armoury-raidmen, so he now again found that the conventional type of valour availed its votaries nothing in the crisis that confronted them. The Congress Socialists were not prepared to rush into the flames to put them out or perish in the attempt. Gandhiji saw that his would have to be a lone fight against the communal madness and its inevitable sequel —partition.

In *Harijan* of 1st June, 1947, Gandhiji wrote that with the ending of the century-old slavery and the advent of freedom, all the weaknesses of Indian society were bound to come to the surface. But he did not see any cause to be upset. "If we keep our balance at such a time, every tangle would be solved." This was a virile, logical stand which at least the commando Viceroy could have understood and respected. But in that regard Gandhiji stood all alone with the sole exception of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Lord Mountbatten knew it. Even Dr. Rajendra Prasad, whose loyalty to Gandhiji was unsurpassed, found himself unable to go all the way with him. "If there is to be a division of India," he declared in a Press interview, "then it should be as thorough as possible, including the division of the Punjab and Bengal, so that there might not be left any room for contention or conflict." And again: "If that requires division of the armed forces, that should also be brought about, and the sooner the better."

Mountbatten was no visionary philanthropist to pursue from abstract considerations a course which in his world of *Realpolitik* would have been regarded as Quixotic, which the Muslim League did not want, the Congress fought shy of, and for which his own Government would have given him little thanks, since it would have involved the risk of one or both of the Indian parties going out of the Commonwealth when there was before him the bright possibility of achieving a solution which would set the Indian parties virtually competing with one another for being allowed to stay in the Commonwealth. Already Mountbatten had computed that representatives "of approximately half of the inhabitants of India" — inclusive of the Muslim League, the Scheduled Castes and the Princes, the three traditional pillars of the British power in India, whom generations of British rulers had sedulously groomed for that role — had "asked to be allowed

to remain within the Commonwealth." He could well afford to ask whether the parties thought they were "doing Great Britain a favour" by wanting to stay in the Commonwealth![9]

At the very outset of his talks, Jinnah had offered Mountbatten to bring Pakistan into the Commonwealth in return for support for his plan for Pakistan. Gandhiji had warned the Viceroy against the danger of Great Britain being driven to support one part of India against another if they had different kind of relationships with the two parts. The Viceroy was known himself to be strongly in favour of the view that British India should remain in the Commonwealth as a whole only; a part should not be taken in. But a section of the Viceroy's staff were strongly of the view that "it would be virtually impossible, both on moral and material grounds, to eject from the Commonwealth any part of India that asks to remain in" and that in fact "British backing, if not of the whole then of a part of India, might be the one way to avoid a civil war." The exclusion of Pakistan might, it was further argued, jeopardise "relation with the entire Muslim bloc extending from the Middle East."[10]

Remained the Congress. In the later half of April, 1947, when Sardar Patel was feeling very worried by the intrigues of the Anglo-Muslim League combine, it was put to him that if the Congress could accept Dominion Status as an *ad interim* arrangement, it would be possible to anticipate the date of the British withdrawal. It would, further, take away from the Muslim League its bargaining power with the British. The argument, it seems, went home. On the 1st May, the Viceroy's secretary reported that the Sardar was now ready to accept an offer of Dominion Status for the time being. But officially the Congress stood committed to the sovereign independent republic resolution of the Constituent Assembly. That did not trouble the British Government very much. They shrewdly guessed that all that was needed to circumvent the difficulty was a "face-saving formula". It was ultimately found by dropping the words "King Emperor" and "Empire", to spare the conscience of the Congress High Command, who continued to strain at a gnat after swallowing the camel.

A couple of days after the Working Committee had decided to accept the partition in principle Gandhiji, in the course of a conversation, shared with Dr. Rajendra Prasad some of the cogitations which the latest developments had set going within him. Interpreting, according to his wont, the outer in terms of the inner, he observed: "I have to admit that our fight was not based on pure Ahimsa. If all Congressmen had honestly fulfilled the conditions of true Ahimsa, we should not have today found ourselves in a state of utter confusion. It is becoming more and more clear to me that what we regarded as a non-violent fight was not really so. Otherwise communalism would

not have raised its head in our midst; untouchability would have been a thing of the past, the rich and the poor would have performed bread-labour alike without any distinction. Jealousy, envy and personal ambition would not have disfigured our internal politics. It is up to us even at this late hour to find out where we have erred and retrace our steps. So long as the lamp of unadulterated truth and non-violence does not glow within us, we cannot realise full Swaraj. . . . But today the cry everywhere is for more military and more police."

After a pause he proceeded: "Training in non-violence requires one to completely eradicate the fear of death and be ready to sacrifice property, family — everything for the cause; in other words to rise to the height of self-renunciation as laid down in the Gita. A votary of Ahimsa must fear God alone and believe in the immortality of the soul. Such Ahimsa cannot be taught by word of mouth. It is cultivated and proved in the school of experience. Our Ahimsa has been tested and found wanting or else every four-anna member of the Congress should have been found either dead or engaged in preventing the massacre of his neighbours, not seeking safety in cowardice, leaving his mother, wife or sister in danger of molestation. It shakes my whole being to hear such tales of cowardice. . . . I have no longer the desire to continue to live with falsehood, hypocrisy and deception stalking all around."

Daily the political situation was becoming tense. This, with the growing communal frenzy, put a very heavy strain on Gandhiji. As a result his blood pressure generally stood high. But optimism was an integral part of his faith. Asked whether the gulf that existed between the Hindus and Muslims was permanent and unbridgeable, he replied: "Nothing of the kind. For that would mean that neither religion had any truth in it."

Nor did he despair of the British even now rising to the occasion. In the course of a conversation with a French friend, he remarked: "I am an admirer of the British character. If they play fair by India, moral leadership of the world will be theirs and the British prestige will stand even higher than when Britannia ruled the waves. The world will then go to her for wise counsel. Let that previlege be theirs. I have always refused to apply to them the epithet Perfidious Albion. . . . They have great qualities."

3

The throngs at Gandhiji's prayer meetings this time were even bigger than on the previous occasion. But the people's hearts were also sorer. The personal sufferings which many of them had been through had embittered them. There was hardly a day when

some one or other from the gathering did not get up and object as soon as intonation of verses from the Koran began. To have discontinued the prayer meetings would have meant bowing to evil. To have persisted in the recitation from the Koran, on the other hand, would have led to violence against the objectors. Their number was always small. The times were difficult and Gandhiji had to be extremely wary. So he decided to leave out the entire prayer service, if the verses from the Koran were not allowed to be recited. His prayer services was indivisible; it could not be performed in part and omitted in part. It caused keen disappointment to the vast majority. Gandhiji turned even that to account to teach them to restrain their understandable anger against the objector or objectors and to give them a daily lesson in discipline and tolerance which is the function of true prayer.

He reasoned with the objectors. What was it in the verses to which they objected? He translated the verses for them:

> In order to escape from the Evil One I seek refuge in God.
> Oh God, I begin every task with the remembrance of Thy Name.
> Thou art the Compassionate and the Merciful;
> Thou art the Creator of the Universe;
> Thou art Lord and Master.
> I praise Thee alone and desire only Thy help.
> Thou wilt mete out justice on the Day of Judgment.
> Show me the right path, the path which Thy saints have trod,
> Not the wrong path of those who have offended Thee.
> God is one;
> He is eternal, all powerful, uncreate;
> There is none other like Him,
> He has created all things; none has created Him.

They listened to the translation with close attention. What was more, no-one objected to the Hindustani translation. But the moment he read it in Arabic, there were objections. Patiently he strove to bring home to them the senseless stupidity of it all. It was a great prayer. If every word of it were enshrined in their hearts, it would uplift them and they would be the better for it. He refused to believe that because some Muslim fanatics had done evil deeds in Bengal and in the Punjab, the Koran was bad. The Hindus had gone mad in Bihar. Did that take away from the greatness of the Gita? He could perhaps have understood, he said, their hesitation to admit Muslim wrong-doers into their homes. Even that was wholly contrary to the inner spirit of religion. All faiths taught men to love their enemies. Not to wish to read a verse from any scripture simply because hate for the followers of that religion filled their hearts was, therefore, the negation

of all true religion. Far from protecting Hinduism, this was the way to destroy it.

* * *

The acceptance of the partition of India by the Working Committee confirmed Gandhiji in the feeling that his place was in Bihar and Noakhali rather than in Delhi. Independence would prove to be an illusion if people did not in the meantime learn to live at peace with one another. To a group of local workers who came to see him he remarked that he for one altogether failed to understand the meaning of Pakistan which needed to be established by causing rivers of innocent blood to flow.

It was a distressful day. Disquieting news trickled in from Calcutta. The situation there was rapidly deteriorating. Some Pathans from Dera Ismail Khan came and with tears narrated the story of the Muslim League's orgy of lawlessness there. On the 5th May, he had a talk with Pandit Nehru. It made him feel that he might have to go to Calcutta for a few days.

Both Gandhiji and Jinnah had been invited by Mountbatten for successive interviews with himself that day. Their respective visits to the Viceroy's House in consequence overlapped. Taking advantage of their presence together, Mountbatten arranged a meeting between the two in his presence. As a sequel to it, Gandhiji again met Jinnah at the latter's residence next evening.

Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten 8th May, 1947

> I had a very pleasant two hours and three-quarters with Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah on Tuesday last. We talked about the joint statement on non-violence. He was agreeably emphatic over his belief in non-violence. He has reiterated it in the Press statement which was drafted by him.
>
> We did talk about Pakistan-cum-partition. I told him that my opposition to Pakistan persisted as before and suggested that in view of his declaration of faith in non-violence, he should try to convert his opponents by reasoning with them and not by show of force. He was, however, quite firm that the question of Pakistan was not open to discussion. *Logically, for a believer in non-violence, nothing, not even the existence of God could be outside its scope.* (Italics mine).

Sardar Patel was opposed to Gandhiji's going to meet Jinnah and thereby enhancing Jinnah's prestige. So felt many others. But Gandhiji said, he would meet Jinnah to plead with him, not once but if necessary "seventy times seven" times. Humility could never harm, it could only advance the cause. Nor did he feel in the result that

he had lost anything by going to Jinnah inasmuch as he had got Jinnah to reiterate once more his pledge to eschew the use of violence for gaining political ends.

Commenting on Jinnah's statement in his prayer address on the 7th May Gandhiji remarked: "On bended knee I ask those who want Pakistan to convince me that Pakistan is for the good of India. Let them put their case before the people and explain to them how it will benefit them. If they succeed in appealing to their reason, well and good. But let them understand that not an inch will be yielded to force."

The Congress Working Committee, he went on to say, had practically decided to concede Pakistan but demanded that the Hindu-majority areas of Bengal and the Punjab must be excluded from it in the event of India being divided. He was opposed to that also. The very idea of vivisection of India made him shudder. But in that he was left alone. He had told Jinnah plainly that he could not be party to the vivisection of India and would never append his signature to any partition plan.

If the Congress High Command had shown the same determination as did Gandhiji, if they had refused to parley on the basis of Pakistan with the British power till peace was re-established in the country in terms of the joint peace declaration and the British Government's own declaration that nothing would be yielded to force, the issue of Pakistan would have been decided by appeal to reason alone. That was Gandhiji's aim when he presented his plan to Lord Mountbatten to invite the League to form a Government at the Centre. But the Congress High Command could not take that firm moral stand with the result that the ground steadily slipped from under their feet. Mountbatten could not be expected to be more punctilious in that regard than the Congress High Command themselves.

On the 7th May, Gandhiji left for Calcutta. Badshah Khan saw him off at the railway station. With a voice husky at parting, Badshah Khan said: "Mahatmaji, I am your soldier. Your word is law to me. I have full faith in you. I look for no other support."

On the night before, Badshah Khan, though unwell, had kept awake till 10.30. When asked not to overstrain himself, he sadly remarked: "Before long we shall become aliens in Hindustan. The end of our long fight for freedom will be to pass under the domination of Pakistan — away from Bapu, away from India, away from all of you. Who knows what the future holds for us?" When Gandhiji heard of this, he said, "Verily Badshah Khan is a *fakir*. Independence will come but the brave Pathan will lose his. They are faced with a grim prospect. But Badshah is a man of God."

* * *

The more Gandhiji thought over it the more he felt that a very wrong step was being taken for which in the end all the parties would have to pay heavily. He decided to make another effort to avert, if possible, the threatening disaster. He addressed a personal letter to Lord Mountbatten which he posted from a wayside station:

Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten 8th May, 1947

It strikes me that I should summarise what I said and wanted to say and left unfinished for want of time at our last Sunday's meeting.

1. Whatever may be said to the contrary, it would be a blunder of the first magnitude for the British to be party in any way whatsoever to the division of India. If it has to come, let it come after the British withdrawal, as a result of understanding between the parties or an armed conflict which according to Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah is taboo. Protection of minorities can be guaranteed by establishing a court of arbitration in the event of difference of opinion among contending parties.

2. Meanwhile the Interim Government should be composed either of Congressmen or those whose names the Congress chooses or of Muslim League men or those whom the League chooses. The dual control of today, lacking team work and team spirit, is harmful for the country. The parties exhaust themselves in the effort to retain their seats and to placate you. Want of team spirit demoralises the Government and imperils the integrity of the services so essential for good and efficient government.

3. Referendum at this stage in the Frontier (or any Province for that matter) is a dangerous thing in itself. You have to deal with the material that faces you. In any case nothing should or can be done over Dr. Khan Saheb's head as Premier. Note that this paragraph is relevant only if division is at all to be countenanced.

4. I feel sure that partition of the Punjab and Bengal is wrong in every case and a needless irritant for the League. This as well as all innovations can come after the British withdrawal, not before, except for mutual agreement. Whilst the British power is functioning in India, it must be held principally responsible for the preservation of peace in the country. That machine seems to be cracking under the existing strain which is caused by the raising of various hopes that cannot or must not be fulfilled. These have no place during the remaining thirteen months. This period can be most profitably shortened if the minds of all are focussed on the sole task of withdrawal. You and you alone can do it to the exclusion of all other activity so far as the British occupation is concerned.

5. Your task as undisputed master of naval warfare, great as it was, was nothing compared to what you are called to do now. The single-mindedness and clarity that gave you success are much more required in this work.

6. If you are not to leave a legacy of chaos behind, you have to make your choice and leave the Government of the whole of India including the States to one party. The Constituent Assembly has to provide for the governance even of that part of India which is not represented by the Muslim League or some States.

7. Non-partition of the Punjab and Bengal does not mean that the minorities in these Provinces are to be neglected. In both the Provinces they are large and powerful enough to arrest and demand attention. If the popular Governments cannot placate them, the Governors should during the interregnum actively interfere.

8. The intransmissibility of Paramountcy is a vicious doctrine, if it means that they can become sovereign and a menace for independent India. All the power wherever exercised by the British in India must automatically descend to its successor. Thus the people of the States become as much part of Independent India as the people of British India. The present Princes are puppets created or tolerated for the upkeep and prestige of the British power. The unchecked powers exercised by them over their people is probably the worst blot on the British Crown. The Princes under the new regime can exercise only such powers as trustees can and as can be given to them by the Constituent Assembly. It follows that they cannot maintain private armies or arms factories. Such ability and statecraft as they possess must be at the disposal of the Republic and must be used for the good of their people and the people as a whole. I have merely stated what should be done with the States. It is not for me to show in this letter how this can be done.

9. Similarly, difficult but *not so baffling is the question of the Civil Service.* Its members should be taught from now to accommodate themselves to the new regime. *They may not be partisans taking sides. The slightest trace of communalism among them should be severely dealt with. The English element in it should know that they owe loyalty to the new regime than to the old and therefore to Great Britain.* The habit of regarding themselves as rulers and therefore superiors must give place to the spirit of true service of the people. (Italics mine).

Gandhiji was quite clear as to what the Viceroy should have done at that juncture. He was the representative of the British Government. That Government had insisted upon retaining reserve powers. The

army was in its exclusive control. Pending the final solution it, therefore, was in honour bound resolutely to maintain the reign of law and order, irrespective of whether the Congress leaders insisted upon it or not. If this was beyond the British resources at that stage, the Viceroy should have immediately advised His Majesty's Government unconditionally to withdraw and transfer power over the whole of India, including the States, to whichever party they preferred. In the alternative Interim Government could have been treated, for the time being, as a full-fledged Dominion Government. This had been suggested even by some British publicists and newspapers. There was yet another alternative. The Constituent Assembly was in being and it was a fully representative body. Power could have been transferred to it. This in the last resort *would not have required the consent of the Indian parties.* And if the Viceroy's advice, whatever it was, were disregarded by the British Government, Gandhiji for one would have far rather that Mountbatten should have resigned. He should not have allowed a deteriorating situation to make partition appear as the lesser evil and made himself accessory to the sacrifice of India's political unity which had often in the past been claimed by the British power as their proudest achievement.

Had this line been taken instead of allowing chaos to build up under the protection of British arms, it is certain that in the teeth of Gandhiji's opposition the Congress leaders would never have accepted the evil of partition at British hands. And it is conceivable that with the third party there no more to queer the pitch, the "collective personality" of India would have asserted itself. The tragedies which subsequently engulfed India might then have been averted, provided of course that the British element in the services had to the last remained faithful to the trust reposed in them instead of assuming an openly partisan attitude or, in some cases, the cynical "a plague o' both your houses" attitude when British interests were not at stake.

Failing agreement among themselves, those who believed in the political unity of their country would have fought to save it. There would have then been something to live for and to die for. History is not lacking in instances of nations emerging from the ordeal of chaos and suffering purified, united and strong. As Gandhiji put it: "If they get a chance to fight it out among themselves and show bravery, they would play fair (and ultimately come together) if only out of self-interest. It would give one who desires to work for unity a chance. At present he gets no opportunity and the pent up hatred goes on accumulating. The plain fact of the situation is that so long as the police and the military are there, no-one else has a chance."[11]

Even if a period of chaos had supervened, it would not have been too great a price to pay for averting the division of India into

two mutually hostile neighbouring Dominions, with conflicting interests, which might turn them into a hot-bed of international intrigue. In any case India would have been spared the horrors of a senseless, undeclared civil-war-cum-dismemberment that preceded and followed independence, not to mention the "biggest migration in recorded histroy" which has still not ceased and which threatens to poison the relations between the two parts for all time to come.

But this course Mountbatten did not follow or, perhaps, could not bring himself to take. He might have felt that as a responsible servant of the Crown, as he understood his responsibility, he could not follow a "counsel of perfection" and expose his charge to the unknown hazards which that counsel involved, particularly when what appeared to him as an easier and safer solution was well within his grasp. He had very correctly judged that with things as they were, the Congress leaders would be but too glad to accept partition-cum-Dominion Status in return for an early transfer of power to escape from the bed of nails on which the Muslim League's obstructionism in the Interim Government had placed them, and the prospect of spreading chaos, which under the Interim Government at the Centre they felt powerless to stem, and that Jinnah would not stretch his intransigence beyond what the British were prepared, in the last resort, to put up with. As for the British civilian, he had sincerely persuaded himself that "already a monk was he".

The Viceroy's reaction to Gandhiji's letter was conveyed to Gandhiji by a colleague a few days later: "I came up here (Simla) and dined at Viceregal Lodge last night. . . . He said, 'I am much touched and moved by your Bapu's letter. Though he gives me more headache than anyone else, I admire his instinct. I would love to be able to do what he says, but I can't always see how to do it, and what is more, the Congress members of the Interim Government do not see eye to eye with him.' " He was, however, determined not to allow civil-war to raise its head. He agreed that Pakistan was a bad thing but felt the Congress High Command were "now quite anxious for it and for it to happen as soon as possible" in the hope that eventually the League itself would give it up. "You (Gandhiji) . . . were the only person who stood out against it and he (Mountbatten) agreed with you. I asked why a strong coalition Government in both the Punjab and Bengal with a preponderance for the time being of Hindu or Muslim officers in the minority areas of those Provinces could not be possible to allay fear, and in the interregnum he was there to see that injustice was not done and there could be a permanent court of arbitration. He agreed but remarked that this would mean coalition Governments in the Hindu majority Provinces also. Jawaharlal had said it was impossible. I told him to consult Sardar. He felt the latter would probably be less liberal than Jawaharlal. He praised them both

very much—wholly different types but straight and easy to work with. Jawaharlal more liberal . . . often agreeing with him but pleading inability to carry the Congress Working Committee with him. He (Mountbatten) again said he was against the whole conception of Pakistan. He was not wholly satisfied with the reaction of His Majesty's Government and was struggling to get them to think along your lines." He deplored again and again "the legacy that had been left him and the short time he had to do things in."

CHAPTER VIII

A LAST-DITCH FIGHT : ANOTHER TEST OF FAITH

1

THE BIHAR Ministers came to meet Gandhiji at the Patna railway station. The whistle was about to be blown. They had not finished, however. The station master was in a fix. Hesitatingly he came and asked if the line clear could be given. "You do not go to any other passenger to take orders," answered Gandhiji disconcertingly. "Why this exception then? You should do your duty and not be afraid of Ministers. It would do you and them good. They must not ride rough-shod over rules or else democracy will go to pieces."

Bowing respectfully, as he took leave, the station master ventured: "If there were even one individual in every dapartment to observe discipline like you, it would change the whole face of administration. You do not know what price poor Government servants have to pay if they do not accommodate themselves to their bosses. During my forty-four years of service, this is my first experience of anyone giving us such an object lesson in fearless performance of duty by his personal example. No wonder, we call you the Father of the Nation."

The signal was given. The train bore Gandhiji Calcutta-ward.

Sodepur Ashram was a good ten miles from Calcutta. The curfew was in force in the city. This would have made it very difficult for Calcutta people to attend Gandhiji's prayer meetings. Several friends had, therefore, invited him to stay with them in the city instead. But he chose, as before, the humble Khadi Pratisthan for its Ashram atmosphere.

By chance Rabindranath Tagore's birthday anniversary fell on that day. Gandhiji paid a warm tribute to the Poet in his prayer address: "Great men never die. Our country has produced a shining galaxy of saints, seers and sages. Their lofty teachings are our proud heritage. If we live up to their teachings, India would become famous in the world as the land of peace."

Never satisfied with the abstruse or the general he immediately proceeded to point the moral in terms of their immediate duty. By becoming co-signatory with Jinnah to the joint peace appeal, he told them, he had made himself a hostage for the preservation of peace by both the parties. The Hindus of Bihar and the Muslims

of Noakhali must, therefore, remember that if thereafter they went mad, they should have to reckon with his launching on a fast unto death.

There was trouble in one of the Birla mills. Gandhiji was a stout champion of labour and had himself led many a successful strike. But of late he had noticed with grave misgivings that it was almost becoming a fashion to go on strike on the slightest pretext. He regarded this as injurious to the cause of labour. The mill owners had more staying power. They could afford to close down; sometimes they even welcomed a shut down. But loss of wages meant starvation to the labourers and their families. He warned the mill-hands against being used as tools for the accentuation of class-war or in furtherance of certain ideologies. His advice to them was that they should go to the mill owners, put before them their difficulties and try to understand theirs and then arrive at a solution beneficial to both.

2

Chickens of destiny had come home to roost in Shaheed Suhrawardy's Bengal. A section of the Muslim League that had all along demanded the partition of India felt disturbed at the prospect of a truncated Pakistan from which Assam and the industrially advanced portion of Bengal—including in all probability the port and city of Calcutta—would be excluded and in which the Eastern wing would be separated from the Western by a powerful group of Indian Union Provinces. This section was led by the Chief Minister of Bengal Shaheed Suhrawardy. The Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League backed Shaheed. They had also the support of Khwaja Nazimuddin, the Deputy Leader of the Muslim League Party in the Central Legislature.

Shaheed Suhrawardy had long nursed the dream of creating a Greater Bengal, by incorporating the rich iron and coal-bearing areas of Bihar. To realise his ambition, he was prepared even to reinterpret the League's "two-nation" theory. "The two-nation theory," he said in a Press interview, "has had as its background mainly political considerations. But there are other considerations such as common language, economic ties, interdependence, ethnological and historical . . . which directly affect people. . . . There has been no finality even among eminent professors of politics on the question of what constitutes a nation and different criteria would furnish different answers. Therefore, the *two-nation theory should be fully capable of being suitably moulded* so as to be adaptable to local conditions as the situation demands."[1] (Italics mine).

Jute was East Bengal's principal money-crop. But jute mills that turned it into gold were all located in or near Calcutta. East

Bengal had no mineral wealth, no industrial potential. By itself it would be reduced to the status of a "rural slum". On the 9th May, it was reported in the Press that Jinnah had no objection to allowing Bengal to participate in the existing Constituent Assembly "or going out of his Pakistan plan, if the Western zone of Pakistan was conceded to him."[2]

The Bengali Muslim, it was well known, had never been strongly pro-partitionist. Bengalis, both Muslims and Hindus, were proud of the Bengali language and culture. The Bengali Hindu was as proud of the poetry of the Muslim poet Nazrul Islam as the Bengali Muslim was of Tagore. The linguistic and cultural bond had survived even the shock of political turmoil. As one of the Muslim League Ministers of Bengal, who accompanied Gandhiji to Noakhali, told him, the local Muslim would have been quite content to have Bengal as a Muslim controlled Province in an undivided India; his only quarrel was with the Muslims being assigned the status of the "underdog". "It is significant," the Delhi correspondent of *The Hindu* of Madras reported on the 29th April, "that while the Punjab Muslim Leaguers are thinking in terms of a separate Constituent Assembly, those from Bengal want to enter the existing one."

The European group in Bengal had a large stake in jute. They did not want the partition of the Province as the loss of jute-growing districts, which were in East Bengal, would hit the jute trade and industry. There was a band of nationalist Hindus, too, who saw in the partition of Bengal Bengal's ruination. This group was led by Sarat Chandra Bose. One of the group was a veteran Congressman Akhil Chandra Dutt. Soon after the movement for the partition of Bengal had been started by a section of the Hindus, he laid bare his soul in a letter to Gandhiji :

> A movement has been set on foot for partition of Bengal and thus "secure a home-land for the Hindus". This appears to be the result of a defeatist mentality. In fact this movement seems to me to be a communal one. Communalism must no doubt be fought, but not by a counter-communal movement for a Home Land for the Hindus. This movement is practically a concession to the principle on which the demand for Pakistan is based. This will not be a solution of the communal problem but will aggravate and perpetuate it. It ignores the fundamental position that communalism is a passing phase and is bound at no distant date to be replaced by political division on economic grounds. . . . Partition will inevitably lead a section of well-to-do Hindus to migrate to West Bengal, leaving the poorer caste Hindus and scheduled caste Hindus (who are mostly poor) to save their life, property and honour by conversion to Islam. Partition will be a wrong step

> politically, economically, socially, linguistically and culturally. . . .
> It was my lot in the prime of my life to fight against the partition of Bengal, proposed by Lord Curzon. By an irony of fate I have to fight now in the evening of my life against partition sponsored by my own people. I . . . request you to express your views and give a correct lead before further mischief is done.

But the only thing common to these diverse elements was their desire to keep Bengal united, and as there was not the slightest chance of the Hindus agreeing to a United Bengal joining Pakistan or the Muslims consenting to its retention in the Indian Union, they all agreed on a plan of a "Sovereign United Bengal", independent of both India and Pakistan.

On political as well as on moral grounds, Gandhiji had always been opposed to partition, whether at the Centre or in the Provinces. He saw in the Bengal partitionists' slogan, "Muslims want to vivisect India but we will vivisect Pakistan instead", nothing but defeatism masquerading in chauvinism's garb. He was amazed, he remarked to a group of Bengali friends who had seen him in that connection a few days earlier at Patna, at the levity with which some people regarded the partition as if it were child's play. "They do not seem to realise they are gambling with the lives of millions." Again at Delhi he said: "I dare say, the question of the division of Provinces ought to be settled peacefully among ourselves *after the British have quitted.* It ill becomes us to bring in a third party to settle a dispute between brother and brother. It only bespeaks our cowardice. It surprises me that we do not see what price we shall have to pay for this third-party intervention. Today Hindus and Muslims have gone mad. But I have faith that, when the flood of insanity has subsided, the mud and silt will settle down to the bottom, leaving the waters crystal clear and pure, to bring the blessings of peace to the whole world. For with all its aberrations, our freedom struggle is essentially based on justice, righteousness, non-violence and truth."

Kiran Shankar Roy, the Leader of the Congress Party in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, and Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, had a consultation with Gandhiji at Delhi. Kiran Shankar also saw Lord Mountbatten. Though avowing that he was personally against the partition of India as well as the division of Provinces, the Viceroy took the view that it was impossible to resist the Congress demand for the partition of Bengal and the Punjab if the partition of India was decided upon. But whatever his individual inclination might be, he was, he said, determined to leave the issue to be decided by the people themselves. Under his scheme, it was left open to a Province to vote either in favour of joining the Indian Union or Pakistan or neither. In the case of Bengal the arrangement he envisaged was to

divide the Bengal Provincial Assembly for voting purposes into two groups—the Western and the Eastern. Each group would then, voting separately, decide by a majority of votes, whether it would join the Indian Union or Pakistan or neither. He was prepared even to consider a districtwise referendum. He was further of opinion that if the Muslim League offered joint electorate and the constitution of a composite Cabinet and recruitment in the services upon a 50:50 basis, Bengal Congress should accept the offer even if it meant setting up a soverign State of Bengal which would stand out of the Indian Union as well as Pakistan.

3

Sarat Chandra Bose called on the day Gandhiji arrived at Sodepur Ashram. Next day he brought Abul Hashem, the secretary of the Bengal Muslim League. The latter, to Gandhiji's agreeable surprise, based his case for a United Bengal on the ground of "common language, common culture and common history that united the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal alike." Whether Hindu or Muslim, Bengali was a Bengali; both had an equal abhorrence of being ruled by Pakistanis "from over a thousand miles away."

This belated admission on the part of one who as a staunch supporter of Pakistan was opposed to the unity of India did not induce in Gandhiji a feeling of easy optimism. Warily he asked the League secretary whether they had not been ruled over by the Britisher from across seven thousand miles in the past. And when the League secretary reiterated his objection to the Bengalis being ruled by "the Pakistanis from the West", he returned to the charge and asked him whether there would be any objection to their joining Pakistan, if, instead of incorporation, Pakistan invited them to enter into a "voluntary federation for the propagation of Islamic culture and religion." To this Abul Hashem vouchsafed no reply.

Gandhiji resumed the argument. Since Bengal's common culture as embodied in Tagore, to which the League secretary had referred, had its roots in the philosophy of the *Upanishads*, which was the common heritage not only of Bengal but of the whole of India, would sovereign Bengal contemplate entering into a "voluntary association" with the rest of India? Again the League secretary kept silence. A part answer, however, was furnished by the Chief Minister of Bengal, on the 15th May. In reply to a question at a Press conference at Delhi, as to whether United Bengal would agree to join the Indian Union, he stated that on all vital matters affecting Bengal and the Indian Union in common, it should be possible to come to some understanding or arrangement, "call it treaty or whatever you will." But everybody

distrusted the Bengal Premier's word. Even in the Muslim League, an influential section had all along been opposed to him, and regarded him as a suspect. Nor had his tinkering with Jinnah's pet two-nation theory helped to restore his credit with the Quaid-i-Azam or the League High Command. The only way in which he or the Bengal Muslim League could hope to succeed was by gaining the support of the Bengal Hindus upon whom they had inflicted wounds not easy to heal or to forget.

Gandhiji tried to impress upon the Muslims that if the situation was to be saved, their professions must be backed by appropriate deeds. A group of Muslim students came and said to him, "You are carrying on the tradition of Ahimsa of the Buddha and the Prophet; you alone can bring peace to Calcutta and Bihar."

Gandhiji repeated to them the advice that he had given to Muslims elsewhere: they should go to Noakhali and reassure the Hindus by making them feel not by words but by deeds that in Muslim hands their lives and property and the honour of their womenfolk were perfectly safe. "Today the reputation of your leaders and that of your organisation has been stained; it is for you to redeem it." They listened to his remarks without a word. As soon as he had finished, they got up saying, "We shall do whatever is possible." Before he could say another word, they left with a hurried *adab* (salutation).

Gandhiji had by this time become pretty well used to this kind of experience. "Nothing will come out of it probably," he remarked afterwards. "But it will prevent them at least from salving their conscience by stuffing my ears with fulsome praise instead of doing what their obvious duty demands."

Could the partition of Bengal be avoided in view of the rising Hindu opinion in its favour? he was asked at the evening prayer meeting. He replied that if Bengal was partitioned, the responsibility for it would lie not with the Hindus but with the Muslim majority and, even more than that, with the Muslim League Government of Bengal. If he were the Chief Minister of Bengal, he remarked, he would on bended knee plead with the Hindus to forget the past. He would say to them, he was as much a Bengali as they were—difference in religion could not part them; they spoke the same language, had inherited the same culture; all that was Bengal was common to both, of which both should be proud. If the Bengal Chief Minister did that, he went on to say, he would undertake to go with him from place to place and reason with the Hindus; and he made bold to say that at the end there would not be a Hindu opponent of the unity of Bengal left. If he were Suhrawardy, he would invite the Hindus to partition his body before they thought of partitioning Bengal. If the Bengal Premier had that love for Bengal and for the Bengalis, it would melt the stoniest Hindu heart. At the root of the partition fever was the

fear and suspicion that had seized the Hindu heart. What he had said about the Hindu in Bengal was equally true of the Muslim in Bihar. He had, therefore, not hesitated to tell the Hindus of Bihar, he said, that they should remove all suspicion and fear from the Muslim mind. For he believed in the sovereignty of the law of love which knew no distinction of race, colour, caste or creed.

On the following day, the 11th May, Shaheed Suhrawardy accompanied by Mohammad Ali, Minister for Finance in the Bengal Cabinet (later Prime Minister of Pakistan), and Abul Hashem, the Bengal League secretary, came to Gandhiji to discuss with him the question of sovereign Bengal. Gandhiji tried to impress upon Shaheed the need for a thorough and genuine change of heart. It must show in his own conduct and in the conduct of his administration, if he expected his professions to be taken seriously by the Hindus. But the Bengal Premier maintained instead that peace already reigned in Calcutta and no-one could accuse the Bengal Government of being guilty of any injustice! He lost his temper when Gandhiji told him that, as the head of the administration, he was morally responsible for every death that had occurred in Bengal and in return accused Gandhiji of being the author of the whole trouble!

"What a curious man!" later remarked Gandhiji. "It matters nothing to him what he says. He wants people to trust him because, he says, the New Bengal which he wants to build will assure to all communities equal treatment. But the future is the child of the present. If what is happening in Calcutta today is an earnest of things to come, it does not bode well for his plan."

He told Shaheed that if he was really serious about his New Bengal, he should go amongst the hooligans, wherever there was a disturbance, and stop the mischief by risking his own life if necessary. "If you do it even for a day, it will transform the atmosphere—not only in Calcutta but in the whole of India."

At the evening prayer meeting, Gandhiji was asked whether there could be an *undivided* Bengal in a *divided* India. He replied that he had always maintained that the question of the division of India could be decided only by the joint will of the Hindus and Muslims of India; no third party could impose its decision upon them. By the same token, the future of Bengal could be decided only by the joint will of the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal. Even if India was partitioned, no third party could force partition upon the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal if both wanted to remain united; and it would be they, again, who would decide which part of divided India they would join.

On the 12th May, Suhrawardy, accompanied by his previous day's colleagues, again came. Gandhiji reiterated to them that the only way in which they could prevent the partition of Bengal was by getting Jinnah to implement the joint peace appeal to which he was

a signatory. For this the Bengal Ministry and Shaheed Suhrawardy, its head, would have to act in the manner he had suggested on the previous day. "Although I represent no community in particular, you see, how I am wearing myself out in a supreme effort to bring the Hindus of Bihar to a sense of repentance and wrong-doing. But you are the accredited representatives of the Muslims. Should you not do what I am doing and more, in respect of the Indian Muslims? But you cannot claim to have done that. I am sure that if the Bengal Ministry acted with hundred per cent. sincerity, Jinnah Saheb and the Muslim League would be compelled to follow suit."

Suhrawardy complained that no Hindu trusted him; he could not even get a patient hearing. How could he convince them of his sincerity? In reply Gandhiji made him an astounding offer, which he confirmed later in writing:

> I recognise the seriousness of the position in Bengal in the matter of partition. If you are absolutely sincere in your professions and would disabuse me of all the suspicion against you and if you would always retain Bengal for the Bengalis—Hindus and Musulmans—intact by non-violent means, I am quite willing to act as your honorary private secretary and live under your roof, till Hindus and Muslims begin to live as brothers that they are.

"What a mad offer! I shall have to think ten times before I can fathom its implications," Suhrawardy was heard to exclaim as he came out of Gandhiji's room.

Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, the Hindu Mahasabha leader, saw Gandhiji on the 13th May. He was stoutly opposed to the whole idea of a sovereign Bengal State. As early as 19th March, in a statement to the Press, he had demanded *division of Bengal even in an undivided India*. The sovereign Bengal move, he argued, was inspired by the European vested interests for reasons of their own.

"So your objection is on the ground of its parentage?" Gandhiji asked him. Dr. Mukherjee expressed his fear that if a sovereign Bengal State was allowed to be formed, there was no guarantee that Suhrawardy, with the Muslim majority in the legislature at his command, would not manœuvre it into joining Pakistan afterwards.

Gandhiji explained to him that in the formation of sovereign Bengal, Suhrawardy had recognised the principle of "mutual consent". The decision would, therefore, be taken not by the simple majority vote of the House but by both the communities agreeing to it *severally* by a majority of votes. He had suggested to Suhrawardy that for the purpose there should be two-thirds majority of each community. Further, since under his formula the same procedure would apply to

any subsequent change in the constitution of sovereign Bengal, he personally saw no ground for apprehension in the proposed plan. "If Suhrawardy has to win over to his side the majority of the Hindu members of the Assembly, don't you see that the present communal situation in Bengal becomes immediately changed for the better?"

"Supposing the majority of the Hindus wished to join Hindustan and the majority of the Muslims were in favour of Pakistan, what then?" asked Dr. Mukherjee.

"Then Bengal would be partitioned, but it would be a partition by agreement among the Hindus and Muslim inhabitants of Bengal," replied Gandhiji. "It would not be partitioned by a third party on the basis of Jinnah's two-nation theory." Since recognition of the fundamental unity of the people of Bengal, whether Hindus or Muslims, constituted the basis of Suhrawardy's proposal and since the Bengal Muslims were numerically preponderant in Pakistan, as envisaged by the Muslim League, repudiation of the two-nation theory in action by the Bengal Muslim League, with Jinnah's concurrence and consent, would leave nothing of the Pakistan plan based on that theory.

Here was an opportunity to avert the division of India by open diplomacy—the diplomacy of goodwill and truth. But Dr. Mukherjee and his friends were filled with vague fears about the future of "Hindu" Bengal.

"How can we—whether Hindus or Muslims—save ourselves and our culture?" Gandhiji was asked by a friend in the course of that day. "Nobody else can protect our culture for us," he answered in his post-prayer speech at evening. "By our wisdom we can protect it or by our folly destroy it." Thus, if Bengal had one culture, as he believed it had, it was for the people of Bengal to protect it.

"When everything at the top goes wrong, can the goodness of the people at the bottom effectively counter the mischief?" he was next asked. There was a thinly veiled fling in this at the Congress High Command, particularly at Pandit Nehru. Gandhiji replied that in such circumstances it was the duty of the people at the bottom to remove the wrong top, even as he (the questioner) would remove an umbrella, which appeared to be at the top but was sustained in that position by him. If they were dissatisfied with Pandit Nehru or the Congress High Command, they could dethrone them and put others in their place, since power ultimately resided in the people. In the same way if they in Bengal found Suhrawardy to be unworthy, they at the bottom could certainly remove him through non-violent organisation. The argument that he was elected by Muslim voters was beside the point. It all boiled down to this that if the people at the bottom were ignorant, they would continue to be exploited. As soon as they realised the fact that the bottom sustains the top, it would be well with them. Therefore, he would say that if the top was wrong,

there was something radically wrong at the bottom. The remedy lay in dispelling their ignorant helplessness.

A week later, on the 23rd May, Sarat Chandra Bose reported to Gandhiji at Patna:

> Last Tuesday evening (20th instant) there was a conference at my house which was attended by Suhrawardy, Fazlur Rehman (Minister), Mohamed Ali (Minister), Abul Hashem (Secretary, Bengal Provincial Muslim League, now on leave), Abdul Malek (Member, Bengal Legislative Assembly, representing labour), Kiran (Kiran Shankar Roy) and Satya Babu (Satya Ranjan Bakshi). We arrived at a tentative agreement, a copy of which is enclosed herewith for your consideration. For purpose of identification, it was signed by Abul Hashem and myself in the presence of the others. It will, of course, have to be placed before the Congress and Muslim League organisations. From the trend of the discussions we had, it seems to me that so far as the Congress and Muslim League organisations in Bengal are concerned, the tentative agreement will be ratified by them, possibly with some modifications here and there. . . . I still feel that if with your help, advice and guidance, the two organisations can arrive at a final agreement on the lines of the tentative agreement, we shall solve Bengal's problems and, at the same time, Assam's. It may also have a very healthy reaction on the rest of India.

Replying on the following day, Gandhiji pointed out the omission of some vital safeguards which he had elaborated to Sarat Bose before leaving Calcutta for Patna:

> There is nothing in the draft stipulating that nothing will be done by mere majority. Every act of the Government must carry with it the cooperation of at least two-thirds of the Hindu minority in the executive and the legislature. There should be an admission that Bengal has common culture and common mother-tongue — Bengali. Make sure that the central Muslim League approves of the proposal notwithstanding reports to the contrary. If your presence is necessary in Delhi I shall telephone or telegraph. I propose to discuss the draft with the Working Committee.

After consultation with the League secretary, Sarat Bose sent a revised draft of paras 1 and 2 of the tentative agreement, and wrote:

> As regards your suggestion that every act of Government must carry with it the *cooperation of at least two-thirds of the Hindu members of the executive and legislature, I have not been able to discuss*

> *the matter with Shaheed.* He is leaving for Delhi this afternoon by air. If I come to Delhi, I shall discuss it with him there. If, in the meantime, he sees you, you may put the matter before him and ask for his reaction. (Italics mine).
>
> As regards your suggestion that there should be an admission that Bengal has common culture and common mother-tongue — Bengali — the discussions I initiated in January last and have been carrying on since then have been on the basis that Bengal has common culture and a common mother-tongue—a basis agreed to by all the parties to the discussions. In one of Shaheed's statements made last month, he made that admission. There should, therefore, be no difficulty in incorporating the admission in the terms.
>
> Shaheed and Fazlur Rahman will discuss the terms with Jinnah and his Working Committee. From the conversations I have had with them, I have gathered that if the Congress and the Muslim League in Bengal can come to an agreement, Jinnah may not stand in the way.

It seems, however, that till the very last Sarat Bose could not get either Suhrawardy or the Muslim League to agree to Gandhiji's stipulation that every act of the Government—including the decision about sovereign Bengal or its subsequently joining the Indian Union or Pakistan—must carry with it the cooperation of at least two-thirds of the Hindu minority in the executive and the legislature. What appeared in its place in the amended clauses was an *over-all* two-thirds majority.[3]

4

Assam took fright. As early as the 23rd March, the Working Committee of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee had passed a resolution expressing its fear that in the event of sovereign Bengal being one of the legatees of power, Assam would be completely isolated from the Indian Union. "If independent statehood is conceded to Bengal," ran an S.O.S. from Gopinath Bardoloi, the Chief Minister of Assam, "Assam . . . cut off from the Centre and other consenting Provinces, without any outlet to the sea . . . would be subjected to aggression both from the East and the West. . . . Assam must maintain contact with the Union . . . she must have an outlet to the sea. . . ."

This by itself would not have modified Gandhiji's attitude in regard to the United Sovereign Bengal issue. He, it seems, had not ruled out the possibility of continuing the battle for unity by a last-ditch

fight on the sovereign Bengal issue and retrieving the field for the Congress High Command even after it was lost on an all-India basis. This, however, would have required Assam to take up the "challenge of independence" and dare to defend its freedom solely by the power of non-violence. (See Vol.I, pages 477-78). For this Assam was not prepared. Nor were the Congress High Command willing to take any chances with the sinister possibilities to which the Assam Chief Minister had drawn attention.[4]

Very important changes had in fact by this time been introduced in Mountbatten's first draft plan. These took away from the Provinces the right of option for independence, unless there was a request from both the Congress and the League for the same. Jinnah was prepared to entertain the idea of constituting a sovereign Bengal outside both India and Pakistan if this would give him in return the whole of the Punjab, but not if the Punjab was to be partitioned anyway, as envisaged under Mountbatten's draft plan, and certainly not if this entailed conceding sovereignty to the Frontier Province.

The ground began slowly to slip from under Sarat Bose's feet. On the 28th May, two days before Mountbatten's return from London, the Working Committee of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League adopted a resolution to the effect that neither the Working Committee nor the sub-committee appointed by it had "anything to do with the proposal that had been published in newspapers for the settlement of a constitution for Bengal" and that it "stood firmly with the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan." The same day, the General Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee, too, issued a statement repudiating the formula for the establishment of a United Sovereign Bengal and expressing opposition to the creation of a free State of Bengal.

On the 6th June, Sarat Bose met Gandhiji at Delhi and discussed with him his plan with some further amplifications. By that time both the League and the Congress had officially accepted Lord Mountbatten's 3rd June partition plan and the proposition of a United Sovereign Bengal was dead as a door-nail.

Gandhiji to Sarat Bose 8th June, 1947

> I have gone through your draft. I have now discussed the scheme roughly with Pandit Nehru and the Sardar. Both of them are dead against the proposal and they are of opinion that it is merely a trick for dividing Hindus and Scheduled Caste leaders. With them it is not merely a suspicion but almost a conviction. They feel also that money is being lavishly expended in order to secure Scheduled Caste votes. If such is the case, you should give up the struggle at least at present. For the unity purchased by corrupt practices would be worse than a frank partition, it being

a recognition of the established division of hearts and the unfortunate experiences of the Hindus. I see also that there is no prospect of transfer of power outside the two parts of India. Therefore, whatever arrangement is come to, has to be arrived at by a previous agreement between the Congress and the League. This, as far as I can see, you can't obtain. Nevertheless, I would not shake your faith unless it is founded on shifting sand, consisting of corrupt practices and trickery alluded to above. If you are absolutely sure that there is no warrant whatever for the suspicion and *unless you get the written assurance of the local Muslim League supported by the Centre, you should give up the struggle* for unity of Bengal and cease to disturb the atmosphere that has been created for the partition of Bengal. (Italics mine).

The same evening Gandhiji referred in his prayer address to the allegations about corrupt practices. It brought an angry wire of protest from Sarat Bose, demanding an open inquiry: "If information false, punish informants, if information true, punish bribe-givers and bribe-takers." Gandhiji tried to soothe him: "How can bribe-givers and bribe-takers be punished by private persons except at the bar of public opinion? Be calm and steadfast." Sarat Bose was mollified but his disappointment remained.

Sarat Bose to Gandhiji 14th June, 1947

I note that both Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai are dead against the proposal. As regards their opinion that it is merely a trick for dividing Hindus and Scheduled Caste leaders, I cannot subscribe to it. Having had conversations with some Muslim League leaders in and from January last and subsequently with some Congress leaders, I can say definitely and emphatically that there was nothing in the nature of trickery. I am unable to understand what Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai mean by saying that they feel that money is being lavishly expended in order to secure Scheduled Caste votes. It is possible to deal with facts, but not with mere feeling or suspicion. I must say, however, that the feeling or suspicion that money is being expended to secure Scheduled Caste votes is entirely baseless.

My faith remains unshaken and I propose to work in my own humble way for the unity of Bengal. Even after the raging and tearing campaign that has been carried on in favour of partition, I have not the slightest doubt that if a referendum were taken, the Hindus of Bengal by a large majority would vote against partition. The voice of Bengal has been stifled for the moment, but I have every hope that it will assert itself.

Gandhiji was in full sympathy with Sarat Bose's objective but he saw that his plan was ill-fated. There was substance in the Congress High Command's fears. Suhrawardy's ability to deliver the goods was extremely doubtful. He was playing for high stakes, but lacking the courage or the will, or perhaps both, to face up to the Quaid-i-Azam, who suffered no nonsense in the Muslim League camp, he was trying to tread a thin wire. And Sarat Bose and his friends, with more zeal than prudence, were permitting themselves unwittingly to be drawn into Shaheed's desperate gamble. Gandhiji felt concerned. Bengal had had enough experience of "pacts" achieved by similar means in the past. He showed Sarat Bose how the same end could be pursued without running any of the attendant risks.

In the course of his prayer address on the 11th June, he remarked that he did not mind standing alone in defence of the unity of Bengal if it could be preserved with dignity, honesty and willingness on both sides. For him it was no political game or bargain; he wanted true heart unity. Although the Provincial Muslim League had turned down the proposition, it was open to the Muslims of Bengal to give an assurance, accompanied by tangible action, that Hindus had nothing to fear from the Muslim majority, and there would be no partition. *It was open to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and all other communities, even at that stage, to come together and treat the Viceregal document of 3rd June as a scrap of paper in so far as further steps were concerned.* The 3rd June plan did nothing but register an agreement between the Congress and the League. It was an agreement which neither party liked. The Congress spokesmen had made it clear that they could not be willing partners in any division of India. Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah did not show enthusiasm about the agreement in as much as Bengal and the Punjab were to be partitioned. Hence, he would suggest, concluded Gandhiji, that Quaid-i-Azam should lay all his cards on the table so that the world could see what he meant by Muslim-majority rule —otherwise described as Pakistan.

On the 21st June, Gandhiji wrote to Sarat Bose from Hardwar: "This one is to acknowledge yours of 14th instant. The way to work for unity I have pointed out when the geographical is broken."

Sarat Bose rejoined: "We have all to work for unity in spite of all that has happened. God alone knows whether our work will bear fruit."

Even after all the parties had given their signatures to the 3rd June plan, Sarat Bose continued his forlorn effort. He suggested to Jinnah that he should instruct the Muslim League members of the Bengal Legislature to vote solidly against partition of Bengal and in favour of sovereign Bengal so as to compel Mountbatten to revise his plan :

Calcutta,
June 9, 1947

My dear Jinnah,

. . . Bengal is passing through the greatest crisis in her history, but she can yet be saved. . . . The request I am making to you is in accordance with the views you expressed to me when we met. But it seems to me that if you merely express your views to your members and not give them specific instructions as to how to vote, the situation cannot be saved. . . . If Muslim members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly vote solidly as suggested . . . I think Lord Mountbatten will be compelled to convene another meeting of all members of the Assembly (other than European) at which a decision can be taken on the issue as to whether the Province as a whole desires to have a Constituent Assembly of her own.

Yours sincerely,
Sarat Chandra Bose

But at that stage, this was like looking for last year's eggs in this year's nests.

Suhrawardy's reaction to Gandhiji's public reference to corrupt practices was, as might be expected, more violent: "I am sorry that by this statement of yours the issues also have become confused. Newspapers have been only too glad to jump on the statement that the United Bengal plan is dishonest. I do not expect any answer from you . . . or even that this letter will have the slightest effect upon you but I consider it my duty to convey to you my reactions in view of the irreparable—pardon me, Mr. Gandhi, for using this expression—mischief that your statement might cause. Not being able to specify whom you mean, you have slandered all persons who believed in a United Bengal."[5] The letter ended characteristically with: "Assuring you at the same time of my profound regards."

Gandhiji did, however, send a reply: "I have your long, angry letter. Instead of being angry you should be thankful to me that I have dispelled all suspicion, if there was no ground for any. . . . Do you not realise that the unity of Bengal is as dear to me as it is to you? The partition agreed to by the Congress and the Muslim League, however reluctantly it may be, *can still be undone by you if you have the Muslim opinion behind you and if you would, as I suggested to you when we met, stoop to conquer the Hindus.*"[6] (Italics mine).

This was the last of Suhrawardy's angry outbursts. Time's revenges were close at hand, which to everybody's amazement suddenly made Gandhiji the Bengal Premier's "My dear Bapuji "and the Bengal Premier "Yours affectionately, Shaheed."

5

To Gandhiji's numerous other worries was now added another. For some time past Manu had been in indifferent health. On their last night at Sodepur (13th May), she was suddenly taken ill. Not enough warm covering was at hand, as Gandhiji always insisted on travelling light. Only one thin shawl, a cotton-sheet and a bed carpet were available. And they were not enough. An old, dusty woolen rug was dragged from the corner of the room to provide additional covering. Afterwards Gandhiji used this incident time and again to poke fun at the vanity of man's sartorial conceits.

When Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy came next morning, he noticed in Gandhiji's face signs of extreme fatigue and exhaustion. He advised stopping all interviews and the observance of two days' silence in the week instead of one.

Gandhiji: "When there is a raging fire all round, I have no desire to prolong my life by taking rest."

Dr. Roy: "Not for yourself, Bapu. People need your services more than ever."

Gandhiji: "What's the good. . . . Neither the people nor those in power have any use of me. 'Do or Die' becomes me more in the circumstances. I wish to die in harness, taking the name of God with my last breath. I have a feeling He will grant me that wish."

After a little rumination, he added: "I am today alone in my thoughts. But I have no feeling of loneliness. I get a glimpse of God, when He gives me the strength and courage to remain firm and unperturbed under all circumstances. He does not manifest Himself to us in human form—for He is formless. But we experience Him when, imperfect beings all, we are able to remain alert and vigilant and tread the strait and narrow path unfalteringly every moment of our life. *That strength is from Him. It is Him.*"

Referring to Manu's illness, he went on to remark that it was a sign that Ramanama had not found a firm lodgment in her heart. And since she was his partner in his quest for Truth, it meant that it had not found full lodgment in his own either. Otherwise his faith should have stamped itself upon her and she should not have to depend upon doctors.

At midday a group of students came to see Gandhiji. He had agreed to give them only two minutes as they had asked, but he gave them ten. The extra time given, he felt, he must trade for the Harijan cause by enhancing the fee for his autographs proportionately. At parting he told them: "Whatever else you may or may not do, you should contribute your mite to the building up of national unity by

eradicating all feeling of communalism and caste from your hearts and by keeping the thought of the suffering poor always before you. If you do that much, I shall feel that the time I gave you today was time well used."

As they took leave, two of the girl students took off gold rings from their fingers and offered them to him for *Daridra-narayana*.

A wire from Pandit Nehru was received. Gandhiji was needed in Delhi for consultation in connection with the conference Mountbatten proposed to hold with the leaders at Delhi, on the 17th May. "Man is a traveller in this world," he muttered to himself as he perused the telegram and then added: "To wander over the length and breadth of India has been my lot. I shall be able to stay at one place only when India is free or I am dead."

Before leaving Calcutta, he made a round of the riot-affected areas in the city. Mohammad Ali, the acting Chief Minister, and the Secretary of the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha went with him. The afternoon sun was hot. When after two hours and a half he returned from his fifty-mile drive, the usual deep red on his chest glowed like a red-hot coal. At half past seven in the evening he left for the railway station to catch the train for Patna. The crowds at most of the halts behaved. But at Burdwan the rush was great. One of the window-panes was smashed. Order was ultimately restored, when members of Gandhiji's party made the crowd sing Ramadhun with them after all other resources had failed.

The next day Manu had high temperature. There was acute pain in the region of the appendix. That night at 9.30 she was operated on for appendicitis in Patna Medical Hospital. Wearing an antiseptic mask Gandhiji sat through the operation and even examined upon removal the appendix to make sure, as some naturopaths, whom he had consulted, had stoutly maintained that Manu's was not a case of appendicitis at all.

"Hold on to Ramanama with all your might and it will all be well," he counselled Manu as she passed under the anaesthetic. His hand gently rested on her forehead. Not until she, at half past eleven, was brought from the operation theatre to the ward did he leave. He had wanted that "as befitting a poor man's child" she should be kept in the "general ward". But the hospital management felt that this would upset the whole hospital routine. Everybody would crowd in when he visited the patient. So he agreed to her being kept in a separate ward.

That created another problem. Patients who were under strict orders not to leave their beds flocked to Gandhiji for *darshan* in disregard of hospital rules and the doctors' instructions. It drove the hospital authorities to their wit's end. Gandhiji came to their rescue by offering to make a daily round of the wards. The patients felt

happy. Even more happy were the hospital staff at the privilege of being able to see him every day. They took extra pains to make the ward look spick and span in every respect.

On the eighth day the patient was discharged. It had been a period of great stress and strain for Gandhiji—mental and physical. With his very strong belief in the basic unity of mental and physical health, the illness of a companion always assumed with him the proportion of a major crisis. But here it was not only a fall from grace on the part of a co-worker, but a breach in his own faith in nature-cure. Had that faith any basis in truth? His God of Truth had flung a challenge in his face. He must find a clear and unequivocal answer. With his characteristic passion, he began to dig for the truth about nature-cure.

He wrote to Manu's father: "God has humbled my pride. I had suspected appendicitis even while I was at Delhi. I had hoped that it would yield to earth treatment. But mud-packs failed. Yesterday the doctors advised immediate operation. Thus does God teach proud man humility. Where He will ultimately take me I do not know. How can I ask anyone after this to face death if nature-cure does not cure? I shall be satisfied if I can do that at least in my own case."

To a naturopath he wrote: "To me nature-cure also is an experiment in non-violence. . . . Manu had put herself unreservedly in my hands. She was ready to do whatever I desired. I was considering what my duty was when she developed symptoms of what looked like appendicitis. I was already giving her earth, water and dietetic treatment. I recommended enemas. But then she developed diarrhœa. There was no fully qualified naturopath at hand on whom I could rely. I was willing to accept you as one. But on further thinking, I came to the conclusion that perhaps I alone was a true nature-curist, though an imperfect one. . . . I owned myself defeated and had her operated upon . . . though with the utmost reluctance. If I had the necessary knowledge, I might have avoided the operation. What would you have done in the circumstances? It might help me to know for future."

A letter to another naturopath, who had tried to console him by pointing out the limitations of that cure, ran: "You say there is a limit to nature-cure. For instance, if a man fractures his foot, it is beyond the scope of nature-cure to amputate his foot and provide him with a new one. Would that logic apply to appendicitis? In the case of a man with a fractured foot, it is open to him to remain lame, and put up with the handicap; in the case of appendicitis the alternative would be death. Should this be accepted?"

The chaotic condition in the nature-cure realm distressed him. No two nature-curists could agree with each other. "Each regards

himself as the final authority," he sadly remarked. "Nobody comes forward to develop the science of nature-cure." The fact was that he was too much of a revolutionary to permit anybody to rest in self-complacency. He had denounced modern medicine as the "quintessence of black magic" for its deification of the physical body at the expense of the spirit; for debasing itself by becoming the hand-maiden of physical indulgence, divorced from ethical considerations; and for its materialism and Mammon-worship. But naturopaths, to whose tribe he claimed himself to belong, must have found in him no less uncomfortable a bed-fellow. He was an avowed enemy of all dogmatism, laziness, sloth, lack of initiative and enterprise and, above all, complacency.

To the naturopath who had wrongly diagnosed Manu's ailment, he wrote: "I appreciate your enthusiasm. But the Indian nature-cure system cannot subsist on enthusiasm alone, nor will my identification with it help to keep it alive, as I regard myself an ignoramus in the science. There would be some hope if you transmuted your enthusiasm into knowledge. If you admit the shortcomings of your system, why do not you try to overcome them by a systematic study of anatomy and physiology? If you had equipped yourself with the knowledge which the allopaths have gained after years of laborious research, you would have not committed the mistake you did. Do not deceive yourself with the belief that allopathy today holds the field by virtue of the backing and patronage that it receives from the Government. In my opinion it holds its present position in the world because, though it is a false science, its votaries have faith in it and have made great sacrifices to advance it. No wonder, they feel they have earned the right to mulct the poor and grow rich.

"I have a fundamental difference with the allopaths. They are too easily satisfied with half-baked knowledge and exploit their diplomas to fill their pockets. There is a craze today for rushing to the West for specialisation. I would entreat all doctors and would-be doctors of medicine to think in terms of the seven hundred thousand villages of India. They would then see how great the need was in India of a medical cadre trained not in the Western style but in the system of rural medicine. They would then adopt many indigenous practices and recipes that had proved successful in India, not become mere dispensers of foreign, imported drugs, when our fields were teeming with natural, medicinal herbs. The true function of the medical profession, as I conceive it, is not to prescribe cures, whether foreign or indigenous, but to prevent illness by teaching the people to observe the rules of health."

Most bewildered must have been another poor, naturopath doctor who received from him the following "nature-cure" prescription for himself: "X writes that you do not pull on well with Z.

As a nature-cure doctor, it is you who have to win the patient's heart not the patient yours. When the patient wins the doctor's heart, he becomes the doctor and the doctor his patient. Here the patient wants the doctor's help but is not prepared to accept his full treatment. In the circumstances, it becomes the doctor's duty to accommodate himself to the patient and patiently render whatever help he can give and the patient is prepared to receive."

As his cogitation deepened, he again and again reverted to the question: Where did he stand in regard to his faith in nature-cure and in God? For nature-cure itself had become to him the touchstone on which to test his faith in God. On Manu's discharge from the hospital, sharing his thinking aloud with her one day, he remarked: "I know, if I had refused to get you operated upon and you had died as a result, your father would not have minded it in the least. On the contrary, he would have welcomed it (as a sacrifice in a noble cause). But I had not the courage to let a girl entrusted to me die like that. . . . Call it attachment, weakness or what you will, but there it is.

"During the last eight days, since I sent you to the hospital, I have been constantly thinking where I stand, what God demands of me, where He will ultimately lead me. . . . Though I have no longer a desire to live for 125 years, as I have said again and again of late, my striving to meet death unafraid with Ramanama on my lips continues. I know my striving is incomplete, your operation is a proof. *But if I should die of lingering illness, it would be your duty to proclaim to the whole world that I was not a man of God but an imposter and a fraud. If you fail in that duty I shall feel unhappy wherever I am.* But if I die taking God's name with my last breath, it will be a sign that I was what I strove for and claimed to be."

As things went awry outwardly more and more after that, and dark shadows lengthened and thickened athwart his path, he grew more and more relentless in the practice of his faith till it became to him the only reality—the central fact and pivot of his whole being.

The following by an European journalist, after a visit to Gandhiji at the Sodepur Ashram in the middle of May, 1947, gives a vivid pen-picture of him on the eve of the final battle for partition:

> I have at last seen Gandhi. That makes me in no way unique, but that the experience, although shared and spoken of by so many others, could yet seem rare and *new* to me, does, I feel, make Gandhi unique. . . . In a faithless, floundering world he is a firm believer, and for him there is no choice between a betrayal of that belief and his own demise. He will willingly die.
>
> It is reassuring that there are such men alive today . . . since for so long he has been so largely responsible for the destiny of one-fifth of the world's bewildered millions. No dictator was ever

so empowered in his time, yet no-one could cut a sorrier figure *as* a dictator. There is no place for medals on a naked chest, no place for spurs on a pair of sandals. His back is bowed, his head is bald and blatantly so, he is wrinkle-skinned, ancient, bespectacled, shuffling and magnificent, a strange sane figure in a world that is mad and ever easily inclined to murder.

I am told by some that he is a saint. I do not know about such things. But he is a sane man. That is rare enough in the world, and unique in politics. I am told by others that he is a fool of a dreamer, that while his ideals may be well enough, they are out of place in the press of today's problems, and unpractical as the world now wags. If that is so, I feel it is only the world's mistake and our individual loss. And I feel it will continue to be so until we understand that our ideals are the only practical things about us, and all that we have pride in as "progress" is little else but the dream of a pig in a poke for a clean lay of mud.[7]

CHAPTER IX

A LOSING BATTLE

1

DELHI WAS calling again. There had been startling developments since Ismay and Abell's departure for London on the 1st May, 1947. On the 10th May, it was announced from Simla that the Viceroy had invited five Congress, League and Sikh leaders to a conference, to be held a week later in the capital, to present to them his plan for the transfer of power, as finally approved by the British Government. So far it had all seemed smooth sailing for Lord Mountbatten. But it soon began to appear to him that his optimism had perhaps been premature. The proposal for the dismissal of Dr. Khan Saheb's Ministry as a prelude to the holding of a re-election in the North-West Frontier Province had somehow leaked out and had provoked a very sharp reaction in the Congress camp. The possibility of Great Britain concluding a separate political treaty or even entering into a military alliance with Pakistan following the division of India, too, had begun to assail the Congress mind. On top of it, London introduced some further modifications in the draft plan which would have made it still less acceptable to the Congress.

The Congress took the stand that it had never admitted the right claimed by the League to partition India. Strictly adhering to the principle of non-coercion, it had conceded only the freedom to *secede* to such parts as might not want to remain within the Indian Union, as it had all along been opposed to keeping any unwilling part within the Union by compulsion. It, therefore, demanded that the Indian Union should be recognised as being the natural heir and successor of the British power, and such units as insisted upon separation should be regarded as seceders. But in the revised plan, this concept of the Indian Union and the Constituent Assembly as continuing entities did not seem to have been preserved. Central authority would simply disappear on the termination of the British power; British India would be reduced to a conglomeration of autonomous units—"successor governments"—each unit possessing the right generally of determining its own future. In terms of the intransmissibility of paramountcy, the six hundred and odd Indian States would automatically become sovereign, each free to make peace or war, or enter into independent

treaties with any outside power. There would, in other words, be complete dissolution of what hitherto was India.

"It is a complete betrayal, it means Balkanisation of India; we can never accept it," Pandit Nehru was reported to have exclaimed when on the night of the 10th May the revised plan was shown to him by the Viceroy at Simla. "The fat is in the fire," the Viceroy told at midnight to V. P. Menon to whom he communicated the shattering news. It was lucky that acting on his hunch he had shown the plan to Pandit Nehru before taking further action. At his instance V. P. Menon, the Reforms Commissioner, redrafted the plan. Pandit Nehru's own reaction to the redrafted plan was reported to be favourable but he was not quite certain as to how the Congress Working Committee would take it. On being contacted, Sardar Patel, who was at Delhi, undertook "to see to that part of it". The lesson the Viceroy and his staff learnt from this experience was that from then on, in all delicate negotiations, they must always have the Sardar alongside Pandit Nehru as a "steadying force".

One of the modifications introduced in the course of redrafting was that whereas under the first draft plan the Provinces had the right generally to determine their future, that freedom was now taken away. Originally, for instance, the Frontier Province could opt, if it chose, for independent existence both outside India and Pakistan. This was offset by similar freedom of choice for Bengal. The redrafting sealed the fate of the North-West Frontier Province outside the orbit of Pakistan, and that of a "Sovereign United Bengal", without an agreement between the Congress and the League, even if both Hindus and Muslims of Bengal desired it.

In the meantime His Majesty's Government had signified approval of the original draft plan that had had such shattering effect upon Pandit Nehru. A cable was sent to London to advise Ismay and Abell that they should stay on as revised proposals were being sent, and further that the meeting with the Indian leaders that had been announced to take place on the 17th May, would have to be postponed. A second communique was issued from Simla, with Whitehall's concurrence, that the meeting with the Indian leaders would take place on the 2nd June instead of the 17th May, owing to "the imminence of the Parliamentary recess in London"! The Viceroy had to swallow the bitter pill when he was peremptorily asked by the British Cabinet to return to London for further consultation in regard to his revised plan.

Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji 12th May, 1947

Owing to various developments, the Working Committee has now been fixed for May 31st. Mountbatten intends to see some of us, plus Jinnah on June 2nd presumably to place before

us some tentative proposal of the British Government. As you know, the situation is extraordinarily delicate and complicated and we stand on the verge of a major conflict in north India and possibly in Bengal. In these circumstances, we have to give the most urgent consideration to it. Your presence is, therefore, essential and I hope you will be able to come here as early as is convenient to you. The more time we have the better.

Four days later he again wrote:

> You must be following the rapid developments taking place here. Mountbatten is going to London on Sunday next and is likely to be away for nearly two weeks. I understand you intend arriving here on the 25th. Vallabhbhai and I feel that it would be a very good thing if you would come to Mussoorie for a few days before coming to Delhi. This would suit us and it would also no doubt give you a few days of rest. Nothing much is likely to happen in Delhi until the Viceroy returns. I was in any event thinking of going to Mussoorie for a few days. . . . If you could come to Mussoorie I could stay on a few days longer. . . . Vallabhbhai is also going to Mussoorie.

But Gandhiji was not interested in the details pertaining to the dissection of the carcass. Even his great affection and concern for Pandit Nehru's health could not prevent him from sending on the 17th May the following note from Patna to Sardar Patel:

> I have received your and Jawaharlal's letters. I do not feel the least enthusiasm to go to Mussoorie. You can stay in Mussoorie as long as you like. I have full use for every day that I can get here. If you will therefore allow, I shall reach Delhi on the 31st May or any time after that that you may want. It would please me if you took full rest at Mussoorie. We shall of course talk in Delhi.

Next day the Viceroy left for London and on the 28th May returned to Delhi with his final plan.

Gandhiji had not the slightest doubt that the British power would go. But of late another fear had seized him. Unless they took good care, independence itself might suffer change in the process of coming and lose much of its meaning and content, leaving them at the end an empty shell as had often happened in history. The Congress leaders did not seem to be sufficiently aware of the danger. He sounded a note of warning to a group of workers, who saw him on the last day of his stay in Patna. While after all the sacrifices that the people had made none could now hold up India's independence, unless they

woke up betimes, their fate might be like that of the typhoid patient whose fever had subsided but because full after-care was not taken, there was a relapse and *death.* What the crisis demanded of them above all was the spirit of utmost broadmindedness, forbearance cohesion and self-denial. They would have to make their hearts as the wide, wide ocean "which receives and welcomes all streams that flow into it, and sustains an endless variety of life. Numberless steamers pass over its bosom, emptying their bilge into it, but it remains ever fresh, undefiled and pure. The lesson for us is that even if someone should ill-treat us or abuse us, we must remain unaffected as does the ever calm and boundless sea."

Touching at the core of the problem, he gave his reading of the situation. The fear of chaos had seized Congress leadership and it was that which was driving them to agree to partition. This was inevitable. Since they had stepped into office they had cut themselves off from the non-violent power of the masses. The quickest way to end that state of things was for Ministers and members of the legislatures with their families to live among the masses, stand shoulder to shoulder with them, and in consultation with them formulate and work out schemes that would result in their immediate amelioration. No Minister, no member of a Minister's family should regard himself as a privileged person. "Even if half a dozen Ministers and their families had done that from the beginning, we should not have come to our present pass. What, however, I actually find is that even your Chief Minister, Shri Babu, since his elevation to Chief Ministership, is less able to mix with the people than before. He is imprisoned in the routine and trappings of his office. That is so more or less with all Ministers. For instance, if anybody had knocked at the door of the popular Ministers, even at midnight, before they took office, they would have jumped out of their beds and accompanied the caller without any ado. But today as Ministers, they require armed bodyguards to accompany them wherever they go. It is worse than prison."

It was the same old, revolutionary cry of "back to mother earth, back to simplicity, back to the masses" which twenty-five years ago had revolutionised the lives of Congressmen and made history. On the death of Gokhale, his political *guru*, who had given India the slogan "spiritualise politics", Gandhiji had uttered the following memorable words:

> You have just heard Poet Tagore's song, "God is with them whose garment is dusty and tattered." As I examine the end of my garment, I find that it is not dusty and it is not tattered, it is fairly spotless and clean, and I say to myself, "God is not with me." Gokhale has set before us the ideal of renunciation in

politics. It is for you, me and every Indian, who aspires to serve India to turn the searchlight inwards and ask himself, how far he or she represents this ideal in his or her own person.

In pursuance of that ideal, in the early twenties at the beginning of the non-cooperation era, the tallest in the land had thrown away their princely incomes. Forswearing aristocratic luxury, exclusiveness and even ease, they had identified themselves with the masses and made their heart vibrate in unison with their own. But it was crisp morning of the Congress organisation then; languorous decline of its gilded afternoon now.

"The Congress has practically decided to accept partition," he remarked to Dr. Mahmud. "But I have been a fighter all my life. I am going to Delhi to fight a losing battle."

On the morning of the 24th May, he left. At Kanpur station his watch was pilfered from under his pillow by some ardent *darshan*-seeker (one of the minor penalties of Mahatmaship!). It had been presented to him by Indira, Pandit Nehru's daughter, when twenty years ago he had gone to see her grandfather at Allahabad.

2

Owing to the engine trouble, the train arrived late. Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru had not yet returned from Mussoorie. Rajaji saw him in the course of the day. Gandhiji told him, that in the India that was shaping before him, he felt he had no place. India had taken to the way of violence. The spinning-wheel had been almost forgotten. They had begun to think in terms of big factories and military force. But it was his conviction that a day would come when they would all see for themselves that for India there was no way other than that of village industries and non-violence.

The whole of the following week was for Gandhiji a period of deep heart-searching—filled to the brim with inner tribulation and travail. In a letter to an Ashram inmate, he wrote: "There is a fire raging all around me. Is it God's mercy, or is it only His irony that it does not consume me?"

To some Socialist friends, who came to see him, he said that although the very idea of partition was abhorrent to him, still he could contemplate partition as a result of an understanding among themselves; but partition through British intervention, or under British aegis, because two brothers quarrelled, was too dangerous for him to contemplate. He gave his reading of the Viceroy. Mountbatten was an extremely capable man. He was trying to keep on the right side of everybody while determined to go his way. He was taking a

measure of their strength and courage. They knew well the policies that Lord Linlithgow and Lord Wavell pursued. Linlithgow and Wavell were, therefore, not so dangerous. "Better the devil we know than the angel we do not know." They were all on test. In the situation that confronted them they had to be circumspect—extremely wary.

A European friend, Karel Hujer, who had been with Gandhiji years ago, wrote to him from America: "I think of you in prayer. . . . . I see the only light of hope for our Western civilisation in your radiant and friendly guidance, and wisdom." Not far from where this friend lived was the place where the atomic explosive U235 was being manufactured. Gandhiji wrote to him in reply: "I am the same as when you saw me, except that my faith burns, if possible, brighter than before."

The Chinese Ambassador, Dr. Lo Chia Luen, saw Gandhiji on the 28th May. They talked about the future of India. "How do you think things will shape themselves? How do you foresee the future?" the Ambassador asked. Replying, Gandhiji affirmed that before long the flood of insanity, which had broken loose on the advent of freedom after 150 years of slavery under alien rule, would subside. The innate purity of the means (namely, non-violence) on which India's struggle was based, would once more assert itself. The whole world would see. At any rate that was the hope in which he lived. No-one could predict the future. One could only live in faith.

Years ago he had read in Butler's *Analogy*: "Future is the child of our somewhat past." That saying had gripped him. "We are the makers of our own destiny," he remarked to his Chinese visitor. "We can mend or mar the present and on that will depend the future."

The Chinese Ambassador remarked that history was often seen to repeat itself. It did not appear to be amenable to the will of the human actors. But that was, perhaps because people did not learn the lesson of history. Gandhiji rejoined that what the Chinese Ambassador had stated was only a half truth. History might *seem* at times to repeat itself, but nothing in nature is static. "Human nature is such that man must either soar or sink." Testimony of past history did not limit the possibility of future human achievement.

They then talked about the havoc wrought by the war in China. Would the Asiatic countries follow in the footsteps of Japan and take to militarism? The answer depended, Gandhiji replied, on which side India threw her weight: "Let us hope that India will rise to the occasion, not only for its own sake, but for the sake of the world. . . . The world is today tottering on the brink of self-destruction. Flames of hatred and violence threaten to engulf us. It is my faith and hope that independent India will set an object lesson to the world in the way of peace, non-violence and brotherhood."

The Chinese Ambassador proceeded next to point out the great similarity between the Indian and the Chinese culture. As an illustration he quoted Lao-tse's maxim: "Production without possession, action without self-assertion, creation without domination." Gandhji's face beamed. "You are now talking in the language of the *Upanishads*. The same thought is to be found in *Isopanishad*."

* * *

As during his previous visits this time, too, objections were raised to the recitation of verses from the Koran. Letters were addressed to Gandhiji that if he persisted, there would be black-flag demonstrations at the prayer meeting. But Gandhiji felt that the Delhi public had by now acquired such a discipline and self-control that nothing would provoke them into doing any injury to the objectors. He, therefore, decided to hold the prayer in disregard of the threat. At the inaugural prayer service there was no disturbance. Congratulating the sender of the objecting letter for observing the outward form of decorum at least, on the 28th evening he declared that even if they all were to come not only with black flags but also *lathis*, he would still hold the prayer meeting and even under their blows go on repeating God's name to the last, without harbouring any ill-will against them. "I won't call the police. I might be killed but you will afterwards feel sorry for it and weep over what you have done. If, on the other hand, I retaliated or called the police, I might still be killed but those who shall have killed me would then have good reason to gloat over their success."

A strong rumour had been going round that there would be countrywide riots on the 3rd June, when the Viceroy announced British Government's plan for the transfer of power. From Bengal had come reports that Muslim Leaguers had threatened that they would reduce Calcutta to ruins rather than allow it go to the Indian Union. Whole streets were being fortified. Large-scale preparations for a civil fight were afoot. There was a telephone message from Bihar that there also tension was increasing. A Sindhi friend wrote to say that the Hindus of Sind were in a panic. It saddened Gandhiji. Were they such rank cowards? Had they lost all faith in God? Someone addressed him a question: What should be done if a mad dog got loose? There was no mistaking the meaning. The reference clearly was to Muslim rioters. Gandhiji replied that if the friend meant a mad dog literally, it would have to be shot. But the analogy of the mad dog could not apply to human beings. Even if one's enemy went mad, the right thing would be not to shoot him but to send him to the mental hospital to be cured. It had happened so in the case of his own brother. Their parents did not have their son killed. They had him cured. "Today our blood is boiling with anger.

There are reports of disturbances from about half a dozen places. There are rumours from some other places that Hindus would be massacred. On the other hand, the counter cry has gone up that if Muslims are to massacre the Hindus why should not the latter retaliate in kind or hit even in anticipation? I call this stark madness. If we could die at the hands of a lunatic without fear, perturbation or anger, it would quell his madness. But the present madness is not of that order. There is method in it. This is how it can be cured. If the Muslims ask me to concede their demand for Pakistan at the point of the sword, I shall say to them, 'You shall have to divide my body before you divide India.' If we all act like that, God will break their sword."

> I am a meek man but should an occasion arise, you will see what true courage means. Let us not answer madness by madness. If we confront madness by sanity, their madness will go, the Pakistan demand will go, or the whole of India will become Pakistan—if Pakistan means what its name implies, the abode of the pure. If, on the other hand, we follow the path of madness in regard to one another, would not the British have a right to ask why our non-violence was restricted to the struggle against them and has now been given up? Were we afraid of their reprisals? If so, we shall write ourselves down as cowards and put the non-violence of those who fought and died for India's freedom to shame. Let us not by indulging in acts which would make us the target of the world's contempt, tarnish the sacrifices of our countrymen—who refused to bend the knee to the British power, and preferred to face imprisonment and destruction of their homes and property for the sake of independence.

During his walk in the evening, it was mentioned to him that some women came only towards the end of the meeting to listen to his after-prayer address. That, he explained, was the reason that made him place increasing emphasis on prayer. The present generation of Indians was stricken by the blight of unbelief. They were suffering from spiritual atrophy in consequence. If this continued, independent India would not be able to maintain her status in the world. For she had neither armaments, nor training in their use. She would need the same means for the defence of independence as had enabled her to win it. In other words, she must learn the art of opposing violence by the power of non-violence. And for the cultivation of that power, prayer and taking of God's name was the first and the last word.

Returning to his room, he sat down to his frugal meal of goat's milk and fruit. Gopu, who came with his parents, as he did daily, was

intrigued to see his grandfather take out his false teeth at the end of the meal and after rinsing them again slip them back into his mouth. He wondered why he could not do the same with his own teeth! Prompted by a simian curiosity, natural to his age, he began to pull at his teeth to see if they would come out, but was disappointed. "Why can't I?" he innocently asked his grandfather. Everybody laughed. Pandit Nehru, who happened to be present there, consoled the child by solemnly promising him that when he would be his grandfather's age, he, too, would be able to imitate his feat!

3

Four days after Lord Mountbatten's departure for London, Jinnah sprang his surprise. His demand was modest—only a thousand mile long corridor through upper India to link the two wings of Pakistan. Sardar Patel characterised it as "such fantastic nonsense as not to be taken seriously."[1] The demand, he added, disclosed the sponsor's lack of faith in the Pakistan scheme. Acharya Kripalani, the Congress President, told a Press correspondent that, in the circumstances, if there were to be a division of India, it should not be carried out by the British Government. "The British must allow the Interim Government to function as a Dominion Government and it should then be for the Government to decide whether there should be partition or not and if partition is decided upon, on what principles it is to be effected." [2]

The hardening of the Congress attitude against the partition plan as a result of Jinnah's extravagant demands, to which there seemed to be no end and which grew with every concession, provided Gandhiji with an opportunity to try once more to induce the Congress High Command, as also the British Government, to revert to the Cabinet Mission Plan, as against Mountbatten's partition plan. He returned to his slogan "Peace before Pakistan". The Viceroy must refuse to have any parleys with the Muslim League before he had secured full implementation in the letter and spirit of the appeal to which Jinnah was co-signatory. No less committed was the Viceroy and he was a man of honour. If the Congress did not weaken, the Muslim League would have to come to the Congress and talk reason instead of presenting its mounting demand at the point of the pistol as it had been hitherto doing.

There had been a plethora of speculation in the Press as to what Lord Mountbatten would bring back from London. Gandhiji did not like this. Why should the people think that their fate hung on what the British Government might say or do? Addressing his prayer gathering on the evening of 26th May, he remarked that independence

lay there, right in front of them. It was for them to take it, unless they in their folly chose to discard it. Why should they be concerned about what the British Cabinet or the British political parties wanted or desired?

> It is not for them to give us liberty but only to get off our backs. This they are under promise to do. But for retaining our freedom and giving it shape, we have to look to ourselves. . . . We are unable to think coherently, while the British power is still there in India. Its function is not to change the map of India. All it has to do is to withdraw and leave India in an orderly manner, if possible. But withdraw in any case on or before the promised date it must even if it means chaos.
>
> There is an additional reason why no vital change in the shape of Hindustan with or without partition is possible in the existing stage of the country. There is the joint statement issued by the Quaid-i-Azam and me. It enunciates a sound principle that there should be no violence employed in the pursuit of any political aim.
>
> If in the teeth of that document, the British power is weak enough to submit to it in the vain hope that after the mad thirst is quenched, things will run smoothly, it would have left a bloody legacy for which not only India but the whole world will blame her.
>
> We shall then have learnt the cruel lesson that everything was to be got if mad violence was perpetrated in sufficient measure. I would, therefore urge every patriot and certainly the British power to face out the worst violence and leave India as it can be left under Cabinet Mission document of May 16th of last year.
>
> Today, in the presence of the British power, we are demoralised by the orgy of blood, arson and worse. After it is withdrawn, let me hope, we shall have the wisdom to think coherently and keep India one, or split it into two parts or more. But if we are bent even then on fighting, I am sure we will not be as demoralised as we are today, though admittedly all violence carries with it some amount of demoralisation. I shall hope against hope that India, free, will not give the world an additional object lesson in violence with which it is already sick almost unto death.

An irate correspondent asked Gandhiji to retire to the forest unless he could ask the Hindus to match sword with sword, arson with arson. He made that the text of his address on the evening of 29th May. Expressing his inability to oblige the correspondent in question by going back on his whole life's work he pleaded with leaders of all

parties to have at least the courage to refuse to yield to brute force.

> I am not thinking of the eternal law of love, much as I believe in it. Here I merely wish to suggest that there should be no surrender except to reason. You have worked hard for achieving freedom. You have bravely faced the bayonets of the mighty British Empire. Why should you falter now? Let us not make the mistake on the eve of hard-won freedom of thinking that we are likely to lose it if we do not yield, even though it be to brute force. That way lies perdition.
>
> I discount all the cables that come from London. I must cling to the hope that Britain will not depart by a hair's breadth from the letter and spirit of the Cabinet Mission's statement . . . unless the parties of their own free-will come to an agreement on variation. For this purpose they have to meet together and hammer out an acceptable solution. This statement has been accepted by the Congress and the British Government. If either of them go back on it, it would be breach of faith.
>
> If you face reality in terms of the welfare of your own country, you will agree first to establish peace in the country telling the turbulent elements in the country firmly and boldly that there can be no departure from the document of 16th May, until the people stop the sanguinary strife. The Constituent Assembly is sitting in terms of the 16th May paper. It is for the British to hand over power and quit. The Government of free Indians formed under the Constitution worked out by the Constituent Assembly can do anything afterwards—keep India one or divide it into two or more parts.

This was followed by another challenging utterance the next evening. Quaid-i-Azam was co-signatory to the famous statement issued jointly over their names. He should have been seen working with him from the same platform without allowing himself rest till they had secured peace in the land of their birth or died in the attempt. And yet while arson and murder were rampant even round about the capital itself, preparations for the division of India were being pushed on. The Interim Government had unfortunately chosen to follow the bad tradition which it had inherited from the British Government. Its communiques went on mentioning in the vaguest of terms, as used to be the case before, how members of "a certain community" had done the killing, without clearly indicating who had killed whom. Why could not they be bold enough to mention the butcher by his name? Why did not the British power name the guilty party and put it outside the pale? He maintained that after the joint appeal, Jinnah had left no way open to himself for the

attainment of Pakistan except that of conversion through appeal to cold reason. He had said before that *if he had his way, there would be no talk about Pakistan before there was peace, and certainly not through British intervention.* Jinnah should first establish peace— in that effort he could always command his cooperation —then convene a meeting of Indian leaders of all classes and communities and go on pleading with them the cause of Pakistan till he had carried conviction to them. "The day we meet together as brothers will be a red-letter day in India's annals. For whatever decision we shall then take will be our decision as among members of one family."

If Pakistan of his conception was a reasonable proposition, Gandhiji proceeded, Jinnah should have no difficulty in convincing India. Though the happenings in the North-West Frontier Province, in the Punjab and in Bengal left little room for hope, he was even now prepared to make a sporting offer. Jinnah had claimed that Pakistan would be a State where even an unprotected child would enjoy the fullest security; where there would be no distinction of high and low and where there would be justice for all. If that was really so, he (Gandhiji) would himself accompany him and tour with him all over the country and tell the people that they could all live happily in such Pakistan:

> Let him (Jinnah) not appeal to the British power or its representative Viscount Mountbatten. The latter's function is only to quit by the end of June next year — peace or no peace. Imposed peace would be the peace of the grave of which all India and the British should be ashamed. Let it not be said that Gandhi was too late on the scene. He was not. It is never too late to mend, never too late to replace the force of the sword with that of reason. *Dare the British impose Pakistan on an India temporarily gone mad?*

The appeal was lost upon Jinnah. Mountbatten complained that he (Mountbatten) had arrived too late on the scene when no solution other than on the basis of partition could be made acceptable to both the parties. And the Congress High Command were not prepared to cut the painter and launch once more upon

"Perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn".

Since coming to power, the Congress had been leaning more and more heavily upon the British created machinery for the preservation of law and order. It needed British good offices more than ever to tackle the problem of the Indian States. The Congress High Command had pinned their hope on what Mountbatten would bring back from London. Their attitude towards Gandhiji's line of approach was one of cautious reserve.

On the 29th May, during the morning walk, a co-worker said to Gandhiji: "You have declared you won't mind if the whole of India is turned into Pakistan by appeal to reason, but not an inch would be yielded to force. You have stood firm by your declaration. But is the Working Committee acting on that principle? They are yielding to force. You gave us the battle-cry of Quit India; you fought our battles; but in the hour of decision, I find, you are not in the picture. You and your ideals have been given the go by."

Gandhiji: "Who listens to me today?"

Co-worker: "Leaders may not but the people are behind you."

Gandhiji: "Even they are not. I am being told to retire to the Himalayas. Everybody is eager to garland my photos and statues. Nobody really wants to follow my advice."

Co-worker: "They may not today, but they will have to before long."

Gandhiji: "What is the good? Who knows, whether I shall then be alive? The question is: What can we do today? On the eve of independence we are as divided as we were united when we were engaged in freedom's battle. The prospect of power has demoralised us."

When Sarojini Naidu came at noon the next day, Gandhiji was having his usual drink of hot water, lemon and honey. She twitted him. "What, hot lemonade in hot weather! Let me make you a nice, cool, refreshing lemon-drink." He persuaded her to try his concoction instead. It was not so bad after all! Pandit Nehru came soon after. She ordered hot limejuice for him also. Gandhiji set the whole company laughing by demanding in level tones from Sarojini Naidu royalty for the exploitation of his patent! "Give me first my fee for acting as your advertising agent," the tease retorted. "Have I not secured the patronage of India's future Prime Minister!"

So chaffing went on while heavy was the heart under the load of anxiety and sorrow.

4

With Lord Mountbatten's return to the capital, the tempo of events once more quickened. On the 31st May morning Dr. Rajendra Prasad had a brief talk with Gandhiji during his morning walk in anticipation of the Congress Working Committee's meeting that afternoon. The Congress leaders cherished the belief that once partition was agreed to, peace would return to the land. Gandhiji, on the other hand, was emphatic that peace must precede any talk of partition; partition before peace would be fatal. As things were developing the minorities would not be able to live in Pakistan after partition. There would be mass migrations and chaos would inevitably follow

because it would not be possible to keep the exasperated incoming refugees under control.

The conversation was not yet finished when the walk ended. Badshah Khan, who was waiting for Gandhiji, on seeing him exclaimed: "So, Mahatmaji, you will now regard us as Pakistanis? A terrible situation faces the Frontier Province and Baluchistan. We do not know what to do."

Gandhiji: "Non-violence knows no despair. It is the hour of test for you and the Khudai Khidmatgars. You can declare that Pakistan is unacceptable to you and brave the worst. What fear can there be for those who are pledged to 'do or die'? It is my intention to go to the Frontier as soon as circumstances permit. I shall not take out a passport because I do not believe in division. And if as a result somebody kills me I shall be glad to be so killed. *If Pakistan comes into being, my place will be in Pakistan.*"

Badshah Khan: "I understand. I won't take any more of your time."

As Badshah Khan left the room, Gandhiji sent one of his attendants to ask him to come to rest in the quiet of his room: "He is so punctilious, he will think it will disturb my rest if he comes and stays with me." It was with difficulty that Badshah Khan could be persuaded to make use of Gandhiji's room.

In the prayer meeting, when the recitation of verses from the Koran was about to commence, a young man in Western garb got up and began to shout: "Imprison Jinnah, stop reciting from the Koran, declare war upon the Muslim League." When the prayer that was begun despite that interruption was over, Gandhiji in his discourse remarked that they could not imprison Jinnah out of hand and, if they could, that would only give him more strength. But if, while retaining their goodwill and friendship towards Jinnah and the Muslims in general, they remained adamant against the establishment of Pakistan by force, they would make Jinnah "prisoner" of their love and might even one day find Jinnah standing shoulder to shoulder with him, instead of being ranged against him.

With partition practically a foregone conclusion, he looked weighed down by care. "My life's work seems to be over," he sadly remarked. "I hope God will spare me further humiliation." Reverting to Manu's operation he cogitated: "It has brought home to me how difficult it is to conquer the will to live. But my faith has become stronger as a result. It is my constant prayer that He may give me the strength to render back to Him what is His, taking the medicine of His all-healing name to the last."

On the following morning, the 1st June, mistaking the hands of his watch, he woke up earlier than usual. As there was still half an hour before prayer, he remained lying in bed and began to muse in

a low voice: "The purity of my striving will be put to the test only now. Today I find myself all alone. Even the Sardar and Jawaharlal think that my reading of the situation is wrong and peace is sure to return if partition is agreed upon. . . . They did not like my telling the Viceroy that even if there was to be partition, it should not be through British intervention or under the British rule. . . . They wonder if I have not deteriorated with age. . . . Nevertheless I must speak as I feel, if I am to prove a true and loyal friend to the Congress and to the British people, as I claim to be . . . regardless of whether my advice is appreciated or not. I see clearly that we are setting about this business the wrong way. We may not feel the full effect immediately, but I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark. I pray that God may not keep me alive to witness it. In order that He may give me the strength and wisdom to remain firm in the midst of universal opposition and to utter the full truth, I need all the strength that . . . purity . . . can give."

He continued: "But in spite of my being all alone in my thoughts, I am experiencing an ineffable inner joy and freshness of mind. I feel as if God Himself is lighting my path before me. And that is perhaps the reason why I am able to fight on single-handed. People ask me to retire to Kashi or to the Himalayas. I laugh and tell them that the Himalayas of my penance are where there is misery to be alleviated, oppression to be relieved. There can be no rest for me so long as there is a single person in India lacking the necessaries of life. . . . I cannot bear to see Badshah Khan's grief. . . . His inner agony wrings my heart. But, if I gave way to tears, it would be cowardly and, the stalwart Pathan as he is, he would break down. So I go about my business unmoved. That is no small thing."

"But may be," he added after a pause, "all of them are right and I alone am floundering in darkness." The oppression of the impending division of India seemed to be weighing on him.

With a final effort he concluded: "I shall perhaps not be alive to witness it, but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence be imperilled, let posterity know what agony this old soul went through thinking of it. *Let it not be said that Gandhi was party to India's vivisection.* But everybody is today impatient for independence. Therefore there is no other help." Using a well-known Gujarati metaphor, he likened independence-cum-partition to a "wooden loaf". "If they (the Congress leaders) eat it, they die of colic; if they leave it, they starve!"

The Working Committee again met in the afternoon. At the end of the meeting, it seemed clear that the division of India was inevitable. In the evening, Badshah Khan anticipating the usual demonstration at the prayer meeting, offered to stay away. But Gandhiji insisted on his coming. So he came along with him.

With deep sorrow, Gandhiji narrated the incident to the congregation. Pointing to Badshah Khan sitting by his side, he remarked: "And yet, you see how uneasy and embarrassed he feels. Let it be an object lesson to you. We must have delicate regard for others' feelings."

Speaking of the discipline required of a free people, he remarked to them: Independence was at their door-step. The Viceroy was only the nominal head of the Cabinet. They would help him by expecting no help from him in the Government of the country. Their uncrowned king was Pandit Nehru. He was slaving for them, not as their king but as their first servant. But it was not possible for Jawaharlal alone to govern, if the people by their indiscipline spoilt his work. He could not, as did the former autocrats, rule by the sword. That would be neither Panchayat Raj nor Jawahar Raj. It was, therefore, the duty of everyone to make the task of the Ministers easy and not try to force their hands.

There was an unusually heavy attendance at the prayer meeting. Before going to bed, Gandhiji had his usual Bengali exercise, writing out all the letters followed by compound characters.

5

The fateful 2nd June arrived at last. Lord Mountbatten had come back from London with a threefold plan of strategy. Firstly, he would make one more effort to induce the Indian parties to accept the Cabinet Mission plan. Of this, he knew, there was little chance. Failing that he would present to them His Majesty's Government's partition plan. Finally, if neither solution was acceptable to them, he had kept ready a plan for the transfer of power on the basis of the existing constitution — Provincial subjects would be transferred to existing Provincial Governments and the Central subjects to the existing Central Government. This would be by unilateral action against which there would be no appeal.

At 10 o'clock the leaders' conference took place at the Viceroy's House. The Congress was represented by Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel. With them was Acharya Kripalani, the Congress President. In behalf of the League Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan attended with Rab Nistar as a counterpoise to Acharya Kripalani, whom Jinnah had tried originally to exclude. Sardar Baldev Singh represented the Sikhs. After a formal attempt for the last time by the Viceroy to get the parties to accept the Cabinet Mission plan, which Jinnah again turned down, Lord Mountbatten presented to them his partition plan. These were the salient points:

(1) A separate Constituent Assembly for the Muslim majority Provinces that were unwilling to join the existing Constituent Assembly,

coupled with the partition of the Punjab and Bengal by the decision of their respective Legislatures voting separately for Hindu and Muslim majority districts; (2) in the event of Bengal being partitioned, there would be a referendum in Sylhet to decide as to which Province it would be part of — East Bengal or Assam; (3) referendum to be held in the Frontier Province without disturbing the Ministry in power, to decide which of the two Constituent Assemblies it would join; (4) the Sind Legislative Assembly to decide by a simple majority vote as to which part of India it would belong to; (5) as there was no Legislative Assembly in Baluchistan, the procedure as to how it would decide its future was left to be decided by the Viceroy in consultation with the Indian parties; (6) the final shape of partition would be decided by a Boundary Commission appointed for the purpose; (7) no change in the Interim Government until partition was affected; when two separate Governments would be set up with complete powers in all subjects; (8) to meet the desire of the major Indian political parties for the earliest possible transfer of power, power would be transferred to an Indian Government or Governments on Dominion Status basis at even an earlier date; (9) the attainment of Dominion Status would be without prejudice to the right of the Indian Constituent Assemblies to decide in due course whether or not the part of India in respect of which they had authority, would remain in the British Commonwealth; and (10) the position of the States to remain the same as under the Cabinet Mission paln.

The Congress leaders' attitude in the balance was in favour of acceptance, but it was made clear that this was conditional on the attitude that Jinnah and the Muslim League adopted. They and the Sikh leader agreed to communicate their final decision in writing the same evening. But Jinnah refused to budge from the position he had taken up, that only the full Council of the League could decide, and that body could not meet for several days. The utmost to which he would commit himself was that on his part he had no desire to wreck the plan.

Hardly had the leaders left when at 12.30, Gandhiji arrived for his meeting with the Viceroy. On Mountbatten's part this was meant more or less as a courteous formality; by Gandhiji it was taken as such. Being his day of silence conversation on Gandhiji's part was carried on by writing slips. It was devoted largely to allaying fears that had been conjured up practically out of nothing as to how he might react to the plan. This is how the slips read:

> I am sorry, I can't speak. When I took the decision about the Monday silence I did reserve two exceptions, i.e., about speaking to high functionaries on urgent matters or attending upon sick people. But I know you do not want me to break my silence

> Have I said one word against you during my speeches? If you admit that I have not, your warning is superfluous.
>
> There are one or two things I must talk about, but not today. If we meet each other again, I shall speak.

The Congress Working Committee's formal decision was communicated at night in a letter addressed by the Congress President to the Viceroy. The plan was accepted as a "variation of the Cabinet Mission plan" but it was made clear that the decision was subject to an unequivocal acceptance by the League of the plan as a *final settlement:*

> We . . . accepted in its entirety the Cabinet Missions' statement of May 16, 1946, as well as the subsequent interpretation thereof dated December 6, 1946. . . . We are still prepared to adhere to that plan. . . . However, we are willing to accept as a variation of that plan the proposals now being made. . . . While we are willing to accept the proposals made by His Majesty's Government, my Committee desire to emphasise that they are doing so in order to achieve a final settlement. This is dependent on the acceptance of the proposal by the Muslim League and a clear understanding that no further claims will be put forward.

In view, however, of what had happened at the time of the Cabinet Mission plan, when Lord Wavell had brought the Muslim League into the Interim Government without obtaining the proper guarantee in writing, the Working Committee's letter added: "There has been enough misunderstanding in the past and in order to avoid this in the future, it is necessary to have explicit statements *in writing* in regard to these proposals." (Italics mine).

This was like raising the alarm after the horse had been stolen from the stables.

In respect of the right of the two Constituent Assemblies to decide whether India or the seceding units would remain within the Commonwealth, the Congress Working Committee's decision was laced with the following philosophical reflection — a trait that became more and more pronounced as the Congress High Command's capacity and will for struggle atrophied: "It seems *extremely undesirable* and likely to lead to friction if the relations of the British with the Indian Union and the seceding parts of it are on a differential basis. We should, therefore, like to make it clear, that we cannot be *consenting parties* to any such developments." (Italics mine).

The Congress President's letter also contained the following sentiment: "We believe as fully as ever in a United India. . . . We

earnestly trust that when present passions have subsided, our problems will be viewed in their proper perspective and a willing union of all parts of India will result therefrom."

The final show-down between Mountbatten and Jinnah came in a midnight meeting between the two — with Lord Ismay as a witness on Mountbatten's side. The procedure was necessitated by Jinnah's absolute refusal to give anything in writing. Before that, Mountbatten had tried on Jinnah the effect of telling him that if he continued in his intransigence, power might be transferred on the basis of the constitution in force. This Jinnah knew was bluff. He calmly ignored it with, "What must be, must be." The master strategician deployed his ultimate "secret weapon". It was a message from Churchill, to be used in the last resort, that if Jinnah did not accept the plan, it would spell the death-knell of his Pakistan dream. But with all that, the utmost that could be got out of Jinnah was a historic nod of the head, which he repeated before the leaders' conference the next morning and which by an ingenious elaboration of the histrionic technique was made to serve as an equivalent of "acceptance"! The League Council met at New Delhi on the 9th June under the presidentship of Jinnah and adopted a resolution accepting the British Government's plan "as a compromise" in the interest of "peace and tranquillity" while deploring the partition of the Punjab and Bengal.

During his walk on the morning of the 3rd June, Gandhiji asked Dr. Rajendra Prasad if he might now return to Bihar. But Dr. Rajendra Prasad felt that it was out of the question just then, "if only for Badshah Khan's sake". "Of late I have noticed," remarked Gandhiji in the course of the conversation, "that I very easily get irritated. That means I cannot now live for long. But my faith in God is daily becoming deeper and deeper. He alone is my true friend and companion. He never deserts even the least of His creatures."

"In all probability, the final seal will be set on the partition plan during the day," Gandhiji remarked as he lay in his bath that day. "But though I may be alone in holding this view, I repeat that the division of India can only do harm to the country's future. The slavery of 150 years is going to end, but from the look of things it does not seem as if the independence will last as long. It hurts me to think that I can see nothing but evil in the partition plan. May be that just as God blinded my vision, so that I mistook the non-violence of the weak — which I now see is a misnomer and contradiction in terms — for true non-violence, He has again stricken me with blindness. If it should prove to be so, nobody would be happier than I."

But he was not the one to waste a single second in futile sorrow. Resilient, wondrously more now than ever, he began teaching the people to start thinking in terms of the future and particularly their own immediate duty. In his prayer discourse in the evening, he observed

that they were perfectly entitled to praise or blame the Congress or the Muslim League according as their intelligence and conscience dictated — that was the right of the people, but they must from then onward think in terms of *panchayat raj* (democracy). "I have called Pandit Nehru our uncrowned king, but the real rulers are the toiling millions. Whatever decisions have been taken by your leaders, were taken by them as your representatives so that you have your full share of responsibility in them."

He asked them not to let their minds be exercised by what had already happened but to turn the searchlight inward. That would show them where they had failed and what they must do to retrieve the failure.

After his evening walk, while he was having his footbath, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur came in and gave the news that all the three parties — the Congress, the Muslim League and the Sikhs — had signed the Mountbatten plan. The League would not accept any other solution; the Congress had, therefore, no other choice but to yield. Gandhiji listened to it all without comment. When she was through, he heaved a deep sigh. "May God protect them, and grant them all wisdom," he muttered. His countenance bore marks of deep sorrow. The developments of the last week had told upon him heavily in spite of his stoical calm.

At night the fateful decision was broadcast by the All-India Radio. First came the official announcement. It was followed by broadcast of the leaders. Pandit Nehru spoke his piece. He was followed by Jinnah and Baldev Singh. So ended the melodrama that had begun with the entrance into the Interim Government of the Muslim League's nominees without due fulfilment of the conditions attached to it by the authors of the Cabinet Mission plan.

A great document, as Gandhiji had put it, the Mission's plan might have been had it not been based upon an ambiguity and sustained by a double cross. No matter how they tortured it, it refused to yield the right answer. In the end it had to be abandoned — a casualty to the philosophy of empiricism. The "means" had once more swallowed up the "good intentions" and defeated the end.

CHAPTER X

A SATYAGRAHI KNOWS NO FAILURE

1

ECHOES OF Gandhiji's utterances that division of India under force or threat of force would be tantamount to dismembering his body and that any departure on Great Britain's part from the Cabinet Mission plan of 16th May, 1946, without agreement with the Indian parties, would be a breach of honour, which he would resist with his life, were still reverberating in the people's ears when that note suddenly passed out of his speeches. Many who looked for a raging, tearing campaign against partition were disappointed. Some felt that he had weakened. Some others thought he had let down the cause. Circles close to the Viceroy read in some of his earlier utterances a preparation for dethronement of Pandit Nehru and denunciation of the settlement that had been achieved. What either side seem to have missed was that while, according to his habit, Gandhiji had vehemently opposed till the very last moment the partition plan while the issue was in the balance, once the decision was taken and both the Congress and the League had given their signatures to it it had ceased to be a live issue with him in the political sense.

The Viceroy sent for Gandhiji on the 4th June, and was at pains to explain to him why the partition plan did not merit his opposition. He put his case with a skill, persuasiveness and flair for salesmanship which the author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People* might well have envied. Actually there was not a word about partition in Gandhiji's post-prayer addresses after the Working Committee began its deliberations on the 31st May. By then practically the die had been cast. His 3rd June speech, which had caused a flutter in the Viceregal dovecots, was in fact an appeal to the people not to revolt but to strengthen the hands of their leaders by extending to them their intelligent and willing cooperation.

Hitherto the attitude of the common man in India towards the Government of the day had been one of antagonism and hostility, when it was not of apathetic indifference. This was understandable while he was under foreign rule. But under *panchayat raj* (democracy) he was the real master; his leaders, who were now the Government, were his servants. The latter were there only to give effect to the people's will. Indians must, therefore, said Gandhiji, now learn to

think for themselves and tell their leaders what they should do instead of leaving them to take difficult decisions unassisted and blaming them afterwards if things did not turn out to their satisfaction. To illustrate his point he took up in one of his speeches the black market evil. Everybody knew that it existed. Businessmen battened upon it. Official corruption was there and officialdom could not be absolved from its share of the responsibility. But more than that it was the people's cooperation with the black marketeers that was responsible for the evil. Was not every buyer in the black market a participator in the corruption they complained of ? What could their leaders or the Government do in the circumstances? Much the same applied to partition.

> I have called Pandit Nehru the "uncrowned king" of India. . . . But democracy cannot be run if you leave your thinking to be done by those who live in palaces, whether they be the Britishers or our own countrymen. If our uncrowned king tells us something which does not appeal to our conscience, we must have the strength to tell him so. The day is gone when the Saheb Bahadur's word was law which must be obeyed. . . . The popular Ministers are there on your sufferance; they cannot govern by force like the British Government. They can carry on Government only by your consent. That is the meaning of *panchayat raj*. It may take another twelve months for the transfer of power to be completed. But you must begin preparing for it right now.[1]

Strange that the Viceroy's staff should have smelt gun-powder in these words. Soon Gandhiji dispelled Mountbatten's fears. Their talk had not yet ended when he asked the Viceroy to release him. It was time for him to leave for the evening prayer meeting. This he would miss on no account.

In his post-prayer address he took up, as he had promised on the previous evening, the British Government's statement of 3rd June for his theme. They must look within themselves for the cause for what had happened, he said in challenging tones, instead of blaming it all on their leaders. Then alone would they be able to find and apply the right remedy. The partition plan had come because their leaders felt that the people wanted it. He had said over and over again that to yield even an inch to force would be wholly wrong. But the Congress held that they had not yielded to the force of arms; they had to yield to the force of circumstance. The vast majority of Congressmen did not want unwilling partners. Their motto was non-violence, therefore, no coercion. Hence, after careful weighing of the pros and cons of the vital issues at stake, they had reluctantly agreed to partition.

It was no use blaming the Viceroy for what had happened. It was the act of the Congress and the League. The Viceroy had openly

said he wanted a united India, but he was powerless in the face of the Congress acceptance, however reluctantly, of the Muslim position.

He himself had done his best to get the people to stand by the Cabinet Mission statement of 16th May, 1946, for a united India, but had failed. What was his duty and theirs in the face of the accepted facts? Should they revolt against the Congress? For himself, he was a servant of the Congress, he said, because he was a servant of the country. He could never be disloyal to the Congress organisation.

Nothing was, however, irretrievably lost. The remedy to a great extent lay in their own hands. The Viceroy had said that nothing had been imposed on anyone; the agreement embodied in the annoncement being a voluntary act of the parties could be varied by them at any stage by mutual consent.

Enough mischief, Gandhiji felt, had already been done. Partition was a *fait accompli*. It had come to stay but its poison could be neutralised. If the hatreds and enmities which it had stirred up could be laid and the details of partition worked out in a spirit of sweet reasonableness and mutual goodwill, the two parts might still live together as friends and good neighbours instead of becoming permanent enemies one of the other, a menace to each other and to the peace and security of the world. He had faith in Mountbatten the man. Apart from his exalted office he held by virtue of his lineage a unique position in the public life of his country, which he could use to help liquidate the evil legacy at least so far as the rest of the details of partition were concerned.

This was something quite different from the third-party intervention which he had always deprecated. A Satyagrahi never misses an opportunity to evoke and utilise the best that is in human nature. To this end he set himself to woo Mountbatten. In a meeting with the Viceroy, on the 6th June, he suggested to him that whenever he got a suitable opportunity, he should speak in the following sense to Jinnah:

> I am here to help both parties to reach agreement in any way that I can and I regard the task not only as a pleasure, but as a duty. You must remember, however, that I cannot in any event be here for ever. Now, therefore, that the decision has been made and you have your Pakistan, why should you not go yourself and talk with the Congress leaders as friends and try to get a settlement between yourselves on all the remaining points at issue? This would make for a much better atmosphere than adhering to the practice of only meeting together under my chairmanship.

Gandhiji further suggested that the Viceroy should persuade Jinnah to go and win over East Punjab and West Bengal non-Muslim

minorities to prevent the partition of the Punjab and Bengal. He should place before them the picture of Pakistan and the status which the minorities would enjoy under it. He would then find that the minorities would then themselves beg that the knife should not be applied to those Provinces. The remaining suggestions related to the proposed referendum in the Frontier Province, and agreement which His Majesty's Government might enter into with the two Indian Dominions.

Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru 7th June, 1947

> I had a long conversation with His Excellency. . . . The more I see His Excellency the more I feel that he is sincere. *But it is quite possible to damage him if the surrounding atmosphere of which the Indian element is the author overwhelms him,* as it may well do any of us. (Italics mine).
>
> All the points we discussed at the Working Committee meeting yesterday were touched upon by me and I carried with me the impression that he really appreciated them.
>
> To be wholly truthful requires the highest form of bravery and therefore of non-violence.

Mountbatten himself was well aware of the demoralising effect of sycophancy and free-lance activities of busybodies to which high personages in the capital were exposed. This was one reason why, as his Press Attache records, he was eager to return to his naval career.

Lady Mountbatten to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur 12th June, 1947

> (Mountbatten) asks me to say that he is entirely in agreement that a real, honest and friendly attempt should be made amongst the leaders themselves in connection with the settlement of boundaries of the two Provinces in question. Whether, on the other hand, we shall be successful, remains to be seen. At all costs, I agree, any further bitterness should be avoided.
>
> I think you may rest assured that we will both of us do what we can to try and bring this home to those people who still seem inclined to show a lack of cooperation and understanding.

Mountbatten spoke to Jinnah as suggested by Gandhiji but in vain. He, however, continued to act in the spirit of Gandhiji's advice, and to use his unique talent in the service of India.

2

The Congress Working Committee's acceptance of the partition plan had created a widespread feeling of disappointment, frustration,

anger and gloom. Gandhiji gave people no time to brood. Instead, like an experienced pointsman he switched their minds to the tasks that confronted free India.

A group of Muslims from Jamia Millia Islamia (the Muslim National University) came to see Gandhiji. They looked very depressed. Their hearts were heavy with foreboding as to the consequences of the impending partition. Gandhiji reiterated to them his conviction that if even one side decided wholly to eschew violence and to rely entirely on the power of non-violence alone, the spreading communal conflagration would of itself die out. But they had failed in that and the partition was the result. If they ceased to fear death that would blunt the most powerful weapon in the hooligans' armoury. "Let us make God our sole refuge," he adjured. "That is all we need."

Master Tara Singh, the Sikh leader, came next. His community had been the hardest hit by partition. It was split. One-third or more would pass under Pakistan. It was largely their grit and indefatigable industry that had converted the scrub-infested dust bowels in the Punjab — where today stand "Canal Colonies" — into India's granary. They felt concerned, not without good reason, about their future under Pakistan. The redoubtable Masterji was credited with the intention of organising the Akali Sikhs into a separate, splinter group. Gandhiji rebuked him. Only because of disagreement among themselves India had been partitioned. How could those who had been the worst sufferers from partition think of promoting further factions by adding still another to the existing groups?

A group of students from Poona came one morning and said to Gandhiji: "We do not feel the glow of independence anywhere." "No wonder," replied Gandhiji, "for you do not seem even to know what independence means. You think that freedom means release from all discipline. You absent yourselves from your classes without leave, damage school property, defy and insult your teachers whenever it pleases you; is this not freedom? And if this is not freedom, then tell me what freedom is?"

Growing serious, he told them that they would experience the glow of independence only when they had learnt to observe self-discipline. In democracy every citizen is both the ruler and the ruled. The people lie in the bed they make. For instance, if they did not observe the rules of cleanliness and sanitation, their independence would only be the independence of the pig to wallow in filth. "It is little wonder to me that you have not felt the glow of freedom when I see you hugging to yourselves the symbols of your cultural slavery." And with a smile, he pointed to the flannels and socks after the Western style which they were sporting even in sweltering Indian hot weather!

He then dwelt on the danger into which the country would be running if it took to violence. There was an endless diversity of view

and outlook in India — religious, political and metaphysical, not to mention the diversity rooted in caste. India would be turned into a bedlam and consumed in the flames of internecine strife if they did not observe the rule of non-violence which alone could reconcile these differences and create cosmos out of chaos. Political parties there were in the West too, but there they had discipline and the saving sense of proportion. India lacked both. "They do not make a mountain out of a molehill as we do. They never lose their sense of proportion. They have learnt to subordinate everything to what they regard as national interest." Therefore, for India, non-violence was an absolute necessity. And the need would be even greater, he emphasised, after independence, when the external control, which prevented various parts and parties from flying apart or at each other, would be removed. "Today Brahmins and Vaishyas look down upon each other. We have ceased to distinguish between friend and foe; we go by religious and caste labels. Instead of settling our domestic disputes among ourselves, we prefer to seek the intervention of the outsider, and the latest instance of this is the precious partition plan to which all the three parties gave their signatures just the other day. . . . It is time we shed our inertia and girded up our loins, to grapple with the challenge of independence."

What the situation demanded, he continued, was work, solid work; not recrimination or verbal pyrotechnics. Nobody had the right to waste a single moment in idleness, self-seeking or disgruntled brooding. They had to be "like a mother to whom no joy is greater than rearing and nourishing her child without a thought of reward for her pains. . . . Striving is everything. But if we strive with an eye to fruit, it hinders our progress." For instance, India had adopted the method of truth and non-violence not as an end but only as a means to the attainment of independence. Therefore, the moment that goal was reached, they fell away from it. "In the result we are where we are today. If we do not wake up in time and replenish our depleted reservoir of non-violence by engaging in constructive work as before, our last state will be worse than the first."

If he had his way, Gandhiji went on to say, he would begin with a radical reform of the military and the police. Under a non-violent order, they might keep a small armed force for defence against external aggression while the people were being organised for non-violent defence. But in the meantime and as a preparation for it, land armies with pickaxes and spades should take the place of armed police and engage in growing more food, building roads, constructing drainage channels and teaching people discipline and strict observance of the rules of sanitation and cleanliness. Their selfless service would then enable them to command spontaneous cooperation of the people so that the anti-social elements would find themselves isolated and

powerless. Such a force could become a means for the realisation of a non-violent social order instead of being an instrument of coercion in the hands of the State.

As with the army so with the police. In England the police was regarded by the people as their best friend and helper, personification of the sense of duty, but in India its counterpart was dreaded by the common people as a bully and an oppressor. "I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that 99 per cent. of the responsibility for the present bloodshed and chaos rests on the police and the military. Instead of protectors, they have become the disturbers of peace. The whole thing ought to be remodelled and the colossal waste of public revenue on these two departments checked immediately. The only way to cope with the rising tide of violence successfully is to begin with police reform."

A few days later, in the course of a discussion with some military officers, he remarked: "I know this is the transitional period and history shows that revolutionary changes are always accompanied by reversion to barbarism. But we are out to make new history. That is why I have suggested that the military and the police should be put to work for nation-building activity. But what shall we do if the people think differently?"

3

Einstein has familiarised us with his "unified field" theory. To Gandhiji self, family, his Ashram and the wider world of politics represented a "unified field" to be interpreted as it was controlled by the same law. The Ashram was his "wider family", and politics an extension of his Ashram activities. Politics had been turned by its high priests into a highly complicated, inaccessible and abstruse subject — almost an esoteric lore which stood above morality and ethics and whose high mysteries only the initiated few could penetrate. It was a part of Gandhiji's mission to strip it of its mystery and inculcate it as the science of the happiness of the toiling masses — a means to the realisation of the highest realisable in life. As such it had to be capable of being reduced to commonplace elements of everyday life of the man-behind-the-plough and to conform to the fundamental truths whose practice, conscious or unconscious, sustains society and mankind. And since fundamental research in these was the goal of his Ashram activity, the latter also held the key to his politics.

His Ashram to him was the magic crystal in which he read the meaning of the passing show around him in the country and of the goings-on within the depths of his own being. "I am no better than my Ashram associates," he used to say whenever he found someone

trying to praise him at the expense of the Ashram inmates. This was his way of conveying his profound belief that a man is worth no more than the sum total of the imprint that his conscious and subconscious personality leaves on his environment; all the rest is affectation and gloss.

It had been one of Gandhiji's greatest deprivations that he could not be among the inmates of his Ashram since he had set out on his mission in Noakhali. But though physically he could not be with them, spiritually he was with them always. Even in the midst of his heavy preoccupation with the tangled web of politics in the capital, he found time to apply his mind to the minutest Ashram problems — whether organisational or individual, technical, financial, moral or spiritual.

An old Ashram inmate was torn by doubt. There was a conflict of views between Gandhiji and a person whom this Ashram colleague, Gandhiji thought, had adopted as his *guru*. Gandhiji never claimed pontifical authority for himself in his Ashram, nor did he let anyone regard him as *guru*. He was a fellow-seeker, only older and more experienced and, therefore, capable of serving as a guide. The conception of *guru*, he would point out, excludes the exercise of one's critical faculty, a guide invites it. In one, complete surrender in faith is everything; the other calls for vigilance and exercise of reason at every step. In Hindu spiritual tradition the institution of the *guru* has a place all its own. It is a two-fold conception. On the part of the *guru* it calls for perfect realisation — a realisation so intense that it stamps itself upon and is communicated directly to the *chela* or disciple. On the part of the *chela*, it calls for perfect faith. All that the disciple has to do is to lose himself completely in the *guru*. The *guru*, or rather faith in the *guru*, does the rest. Faith means surrender — spontaneous, effortless and absolute. At the instance of the *guru* the disciple must be ready to walk even through fire without hesitation. But in practice such faith and a *guru* worthy of such faith are hard to find. The subtle idea behind the institution of the *guru*, as it has come to be commonly understood and obtains today, is more or less attainment of moral perfection "without tears", and there is no end to deception and fraud that goes on under its name.

For himself, Gandhiji believed only in the hard, dusty way of ceaseless striving and knocking at God's door for grace, which millions must tread. He never craved for mystic shortcuts to holiness or perfection. And he recommended the same road to all wayfarers who sought his counsel. Truth alone was his *guru*, he used to say, and he had only one *chela* and an imperfect one at that, viz. himself.

To his doubt-torn colleague he wrote: "I am like a father to you all. If what I say appeals to your head and heart then alone you should accept it. You are free to pick and choose. But that cannot be said

in regard to one whom we regard as our *guru*. There is no 'pick and choose' there. Whatever the *guru* says should go straight home without the aid of reason. In the absence of such a *guru* one should listen to everybody and then act as one feels prompted. There is a proverb which says that our own intuition (such as it is) is a better guide than all the learning and intellect of another. As you know, I have searched in vain for a *guru* of the type which I had fancied you had found, and I have envied those who have claimed that they had found one. These friends in their turn recommended to me the names of Raman Maharshi, Aurobindo Ghosh, Sahebji Maharaj of Agra, Upasani Baba, Mehar Baba and another name in Karnatak which I have forgotten. But I could adopt none of them and in the end came to the conclusion that perhaps as with ideals, so with *gurus* the quest is more than the attainment. An ideal ceases to be an ideal if it is realised. One can contemplate it, come ever closer to it, but never reach it."

Not only did he set his face against being regarded as an embodiment of perfection, he invited all friends and associates to constitute themselves into his conscience-keepers. They must scrutinise his life and critically examine his theories. Only if they were proved by the test of time were they of any value: "You should also ponder . . . whether my conception of Brahmacharya on which I have tried to base my life, may not after all be the result of a delusion on my part, since I cannot make others see what to me is clear as daylight. The ultimate criterion of the soundness and purity of my theories and conduct must be whether my life, taken as a whole, has moved in the direction of greater self-control and renunciation or of self-indulgence."

To another co-worker, who had come to tarry in the Ashram after a serious moral lapse and had not been able to stand firm to his resolve even afterwards, he similarly wrote that he could indicate to him no other way except that of hard striving for the grace of God: "I cannot offer you any solace. Remembrance of God's name is the only solace for those who have lost faith in themselves. To realise its potency one should be prepared to struggle without despairing or losing faith, with His name on his lips even unto death. My prescription for you, therefore, is that . . . you should derive whatever strength and solace Ramanama can give you and lose yourselves in whatever service falls to your lot and you feel yourself up to."

* * *

There was a proposal about this time to acquire the ancestral home of the Gandhi family for the nation. A relation who was in occupation wrote to him to invoke his aid against what she regarded as expropriation.

Gandhiji had long renounced all interest in his ancestral property.

To live in mankind was his passion and he sought to inculcate the same on his kith and kin, too. Answering the letter in question, he wrote: "As an old adage has it, a wise man should use his ancestral well to swim in, not to drown in or to commit suicide. You ought to give up this house and be satisfied with whatever compensation they offer. I can understand your asking for alternative accommodation. But if you insist on continuing to live in this very house, it will only show short-sighted attachment on your part. I do not care for monuments. . . . But if there is a chance of our ancestral house being put to some good use, you, or rather your counsellors, should not stand in the way."

* * *

Gandhiji was the Master Builder. But it was the silent, selfless, unassuming workers—men, women and children trained in the Ashram system of life—not necessarily in the Ashram—who constituted the bricks with which he built his edifice of mass Satyagraha. Outwardly, these workers had nothing very much to show. They were mostly simple souls. They had their shortcomings and oddities. That some of them were endowed with a variety of versatile gifts is another matter. He made use of these. But it was not for these principally that he valued them but for their qualities of courage, loyalty, and faith, intuitive understanding of what he stood for, and above all, their capacity to sacrifice themselves in soldierly obedience for the cause. They constituted the nucleus, the hard core, which time and again he used to touch off his "chain reactions" when his political colleagues thinking in terms of political action only hung back assailed by intellectual doubt and he launched forth alone. No wonder, he did not stint giving his time and attention to discover and mould such workers and gave them his best to get the best out of them.

People with academic conceit found all this hard to understand. They thought it was an idiosyncrasy of his which had at best to be tolerated as the "infirmity of a noble mind". They felt disappointed when he could not view things from their angle. He had his own criteria of values which were different from theirs and the values by which they swore, he had discarded, having found them to be useless in his mission.

The tribute he paid to Professor Dharmanand Kosambi, a distinguished Buddhist divine and Pali scholar with an international reputation, when he died about this time, serves to illustrate this trait of Gandhiji's. The Professor could have easily commanded a lucrative career but he chose the field of service and a life of voluntary poverty. When Gandhiji founded the Gujarat Vidyapith (the National University) following upon the launching of the non-cooperation movement in the early twenties, Professor Kosambi joined it as a member

of the staff. Towards the close of his life he came to the Ashram to pass his last days there. He could have gone to live in comfort with his son and daughter who were well-placed in life. They would have had the ablest doctors attending upon him. But he preferred to live and die as a monk in the quiet atmosphere of the Ashram. He was reluctant even to receive the services of Ashram inmates. He practically fasted during his sojourn in the Ashram. Shortly before the end, he was asked if his son and daughter should be sent for. But with his characteristic Buddhist equanimity he said 'No' and instead sent for his Ashram attendant, placed his hand upon his head in blessing and delivered his spirit in perfect peace. Remarked Gandhiji on his death: "Enforcement of the Buddhist doctrine in his own life had taught him how to regard death as the most faithful and unfailing friend and deliverer. . . . He . . . shed the fragrance of his life among the privileged inmates of the Ashram."

Another Sanskrit scholar, Parchure Shastri, was stricken with leprosy and as a patient divided Gandhiji's attention equally with Lord Linlithgow when negotiations for India's participation were in progress.

Then there was Chakrayya, the Harijan youth from South India. He had joined the Ashram as a youngster and become an expert craftsman. It was his ambition to serve the Harijans in his own village. Suddenly he developed symptoms of what looked like epilepsy and was later diagnosed to be a case of brain tumour. He was a believer in nature-cure. But Gandhiji saw that nature-cure would not help in his case and advised a major operation. Half an hour before going to the operation theatre, Chakrayya wrote to an inmate of the Ashram: "I was very despondent, but now my despondency is gone. One feels happy to go to see the earthly father. How much happier one must feel at the thought of going to see the Father in Heaven? I am no more afraid of death. I am prepared to meet it with joy in the heart."

Young Chakrayya died taking God's name till his last conscious moment.

Sharing his bereavement with his prayer congregation, Gandhiji said that he felt like weeping over Chakrayya's death. But he dared not. Chakrayya had become like a son to him. Tulsidas had sung that Mother India needed sons who were either heroes in action or in their beneficence. Chakrayya was a hero in both. He had shed the fear of death. He had given himself wholly to the service of humanity. A Harijan, he made no distinction between caste and outcaste, Hindu and Muslim. To him they were all men and he was a *man* in the real sense of the word.

The rest of the speech was devoted to the status of Princes in free India. In free India there would be neither Birla *raj* nor Nawab of

Bhopal *raj* but *panchayat raj.* Individuals would not count except as such. "Only when Nawabs become the people's trustees and millions of Indian youth emulate the example of Chakrayya, will India come into her own and her sons and daughters experience the full glow of independence." His putting Chakrayya's name side by side with the Princes' therefore, he remarked, had "a meaning all its own".

A couple of days later he again returned to the theme. The time was fast coming, he said, when India would have to elect its first President. He would gladly have proposed the name of Chakrayya for the purpose had Chakrayya lived. "*I would rejoice to think that we had a sweeper girl of a stout heart, incorruptible and of crystal-like purity to be our first President.* It is no vain dream. There are such girls, if we would set our hearts on having rustic Presidents. *Such a girl could be assisted in the discharge of her duties by a person like Pandit Nehru who could act as her Secretary or Chief Minister. Future Presidents of the Indian Republic would not be required to know English.* They would have as their counsellors wise patriots knowing the necessary foreign language and the art of true statesmanship." Only the ignorant folly of the people, he concluded, prevented them from realising their full sovereignty.

In a letter to the Ashram, after Chakrayya's death, he wrote: "I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that one who is a devotee of God, valiant and servant of the nation, is fit to be the first President of free India. As early as 1917 or 1918 I said in a public speech that *so long as a shoe-maker or a sweeper did not become the President of India, I for one would not be satisfied.*" (Italics mine).

4

"If we can't banish mass poverty and unemployment from India," Gandhiji remarked to a group of Congress workers who saw him at Calcutta in the second week of May, "our independence will be only so-called." Independence would only remove some of the obstacles in their way. But from what he saw, he was afraid that unless they bestirred themselves, at least for a decade after independence conditions in India would grow steadily worse. His test of true independence was that every man in the country should have sufficiency of healthy, balanced diet, adequate clothing, a house to live in amid healthy surroundings, facilities for the education of his children. The only way to turn this into a present possibility for the millions was to mobilise their self-help and to teach them by their own efforts to provide themselves with these, by utilising resources readily available for the purpose. This called for constructive work by Congressmen on a decentralised basis in the villages instead of centralised planning and industrialisation on a colossal scale. He predicted that

the latter would be found to be a big mistake in the end: "Force of circumstances will compel you if you of your own accord do not do what I am telling you." It filled him with an uneasy feeling, he said, that on the eve of independence, Congressmen were dissipating their energy in a scramble for power when it was needed for an all-out constructive effort. He concluded with the pregnant remark that *to the extent to which constructive workers were imbued with the qualities of truthfulness, courage and non-violence, they would be able to infect the masses with the same and enable them to realise the freedom from fear which is the meaning of true independence.*

The Congress organisation was fast losing prestige and power. "You seem to forget," he wrote in a letter to a friend, "that after 150 years of slavery, it would not be too much to presume that we shall need at least half that much time to cleanse our body-politic of the virus that has infiltrated every cell and pore of our being during our subjection. Far greater sacrifices will be needed after the attainment of Swaraj (people's Government) to realise Suraj (the era of good Government or happiness of the people) than were required . . . for the attainment of freedom."

He had noted with growing concern that there were Congressmen who thought that after independence there would be no need for renunciation. He warned them that they were very much mistaken. "While we were under slavery, renunciation was needed for attaining independence but after we are free, we shall all the more need to live up to the full ideal of renunciation as laid down in *Ishopanishad* in order to sustain independence."

Pursuing the argument further, he told Dr. Rajendra Prasad that the first thing for them should be to lighten the burden of taxation and implement in full the constructive programme to which Congress had pledged itself. The politics of the country should be based on it. That did not require much cleverness but determination and honesty of purpose. For instance, universalisation of Khadi was simplicity itself, but if they yielded even by a jot in the matter of creating new mills, their Khadi scheme would come to naught. *They must not succumb to the temptation of filling the exchequer like the previous Government.* "I am also of the opinion that we should introduce fresh blood into the Congress organisation. Because Congressmen have gone to prison, it does not mean that they should now hold all administrative jobs as a reward for their past sacrifices. On the contrary, shedding all prepossessions and party prejudices we should freely make use of administrative talent and experience wherever it is to be found even outside the Congress ranks."

This particularly applied to the Indian States. There was a vast fund of experience, knowledge, administrative talent and statesmanship in the States, which could be put to use with the greatest advantage

to the country. "I am sure they will be able to give us much that we lack and need. Congressmen knew how to give fight, fill jails; but they lack the art of Government, never having had any experience of administration. The States can provide us with all that if we know how to tap and to utilise it."

Two days later, he again dwelt on the need of top-notch Congress leadership keeping out of the Government. If all top-ranking Congress leaders went into the Government, they would be cut off from the people and unscrupulous vote-catchers and mischief-making elements would have clear field to delude the people by their machinations. That was the reason, he said, why he had suggested that a Harijan like Chakrayya, or a pure hearted brave Harijan girl should be elected as the first President of India. It would keep top-notch leaders in close touch with the people and train younger men for responsibility.

Elaborating the theme further in a talk with a colleague Gandhiji remarked that no-one who wields power can remain unaffected by it. The system swallows up the man and fetters his freedom of action and thought. "Perhaps you will say that after all someone has to wear these fetters. My reply is that there are enough men in our country with talent for that kind of work. We can easily put them to it with double advantage — advantage to themselves and to the country."

Since its inception the Congress had been organised as a fighting machine to give battle to the alien ruling power. It had shunned power for long. Even when it decided to form Governments in the Provinces, under the Government of India Act of 1935, the Congress High Command had stayed out and through the Working Committee and the Parliamentary Board maintained a strict control over parliamentary work and the functioning of the Congress Ministries. Thanks to the unquestioned authority and popularity which the Congress High Command then wielded and the confidence they inspired, the arrangement worked, on the whole, fairly satisfactorily. The Congress organisation served as a link between the people and the Congress Ministries. It armed Congress Ministries with the sanction of popular support on the one hand and guaranteed proper implementation of Congress policies by the Congress Ministries on the other. There was no dichotomy between the Congress organisation and its nominees in the Government. But with the formation of the Interim Government at the Centre, in September 1946, the senior members of the Congress organisation themselves went into office and the Congress organisation was left in the hands of "second-line fighters". As old and tried leaders of the nation, the Congress members of the Interim Government felt, perhaps not without some justification, that the nation's interests were safe in their hands. It would also seem that with coming into power, they no longer cared much for

the sanction of mass non-violence, since they could now use the State machinery. They found control by the Congress organisation irksome and even a hindrance in their freedom of action. Friction developed, consequently, between the Congress leaders in the Interim Government and the section outside, who were in charge of the Congress organisation. The former complained of "interference" by the latter; the latter of "lack of cooperation" by the former. As a remedy for this state of things, Gandhiji proposed that front-rank Congress leadership should lay upon itself a self-denying ordinance, keep out of the Government and entrust the running of the Government to second-line fighters, who would act under their experienced supervision and guidance. It would enable the Congress High Command to take a detached view of governmental activity and to supplement it by organising popular initiative on a basis of self-help so that the work of nation-building could proceed apace without much cost to the exchequer, untrammelled by the vagaries of the corrupt, wasteful and slow-moving bureaucratic machine. Backed by the non-violent organisation of the people, the State would be able increasingly to dispense with the sanction of force and become a symbol and embodiment of the will of the people democratically expressed, instead of an instrument of coercion in the hands of the party in power. Office would be shorn of much of its glamour; power would not carry extravagantly high emoluments; control would vest in those who had proved their sincerity by their self-sacrifice, service of the people and renunciation, and the power and functions of the State would shrink as the people developed initiative, voluntary discipline and non-violent organisation. Thus would true democracy come to birth.

5

In ordinary parlance it was the hour of defeat. The tide had run against Gandhiji. But as he put it to Badshah Khan, "Victory and defeat are for those only who rely on physical strength; a Satyagrahi knows no failure." In science the failure of an experiment to yield the anticipated result often proves to be a far more important event than the obtaining of the stereotyped result. It is the same in Satyagraha. The alchemy of detachment rooted in surrender to the will of God, holds the same place in Satyagraha as, what Bertrand Russell has called, "the scientific outlook" in physical research. It converts the whole round of the Satyagrahi's experience into an unending cycle of discovery and progress, in which failure and defeat can have no place.

Again and again it had happened during India's non-violent freedom struggle — every fight brought India nearer the goal, irrespective

of the immediate result. Every mistake led to fresh discovery, added strength, more power, more prestige. Every time the Congress was imprisoned, or the struggle suffered a set-back, the gleeful whisper went round in the opponent's camp that it was at last all over with the Congress. But each time the satisfaction proved to be shortlived. The weaponless warrior proved more formidable in defeat than the armoured adversary in victory. The cause triumphed, the battle was won even when the fight was lost.

"Failures do come in life," remarked Gandhiji to a friend after the Working Committee's decision accepting the partition plan, "but he alone lives who uses them to discover and to remove the cause." He used the reverse which the cause of India's unity had suffered to make the people turn the searchlight inward and realise Indian unity through self-purification and union of hearts after it was geographically broken.

What was the secret of this baffling phenomenon? What made him invulnerable? What drove even the British power, whose policies ran counter to his, to seek his counsel?

The answer is to be found in his utter self-effacement, his all-consuming longing to serve all living beings irrespective of any distinction whatever, and finally in his passion to seek God's truth only and surrender his whole being to it to the exclusion of everything else. It enabled him to see with an eye unclouded by passion, prejudice or pride, from the sublime self-transcending height of serenity and detachment, far beyond victory and defeat into the heart of events and into the souls of the actors behind those events. It gave him that mellow wisdom which made the Australian Governor of an Indian Province remark that on meeting him one got the unusual feeling that "he was a man with whom one could discuss one's most intimate personal problems, and get wise and understanding advice."[2] This was also the secret of his universal love, which transcending the immediate and the transitory, enabled him to set his sights to the abiding and the eternal; to regard the opponent as an extension of himself and himself as a mere drop in the ocean of humanity.

And so with his cherished ideal of non-violence in grave jeopardy, and his dream of realising unity in the land of his birth threatened with imminent destruction, he became a radiating focus of hope and cheer, quiet self-confidence and strength. In sorrow and in anger, in frustration and in despair people came to him — some to mock, others to abuse. His unruffled equipoise and cool, incisive logic blunted the shafts of their anger. Those who came to quarrel stayed to adore, surprised and overwhelmed by his abundant love. Even when they were unconvinced, they left their rancour behind and went away feeling that in him they had a potential friend and ally, whom they could not afford to lose. His unquenchable faith in the potency of non-violence and invulnerability of Satyagraha was contagious. It

infected even casual visitors. Those who came in depression and doubt went back cheered and strengthened.

A Christian missionary had with him a ten minute talk on truth, non-violence and God in the first week of June. "You will wish to know," Gandhiji remarked in the course of their conversation, "what the marks of a man are who wants to realise truth which is God. He must be completely free from anger and lust, greed and attachment, pride and fear. He must reduce himself to zero and have perfect control over all his senses — beginning with the palate or tongue. Tongue is the organ of speech as well as of taste. It is with the tongue that we indulge in exaggeration, untruth and speech that hurts. The craving for taste makes us slaves to the palate so that like animals we live to eat. But with proper discipline, we can make ourselves into beings only a 'little below the angels'. He who has mastered his senses is first and foremost among men. All virtues reside in him. God manifests Himself through him. Such is the power of self-discipline or self-purification."

A group of Hindu Mahasabhaites came some time later. Their cheeks bulged with betel leaves, which they kept chewing all the time. They opened on the note struck so often at the evening prayers. He was forbidden recitation of verses from the Koran. They next asked him to make his exit from politics, the sooner the better for India's well-being. Instead of resenting their gratuitous advice, he patiently explained to them that his whole life was dedicated to God's service. His politics was not unrelated to the deepest things in life. It was only an extension or application of the ideals of truth and non-violence to the social sphere. He would die in the propagation of those ideals rather than barter them even for independence. They must, therefore, excuse him for not taking their advice.

Some missionaries, with a Philippino came on the following day. They praised India's non-violent revolution which was "without a precedent in history". But they wondered if it was possible to abolish war in the present era of science and industrialisation and realise the ideal of world peace. Gandhiji had no doubt in his mind that he could pit the spinning-wheel with all that it implied against the atom bomb. In other words, if they adopted the ideal of a decentralised economy, based upon self-help, self-sufficiency and spiritual values (voluntary limitation of human wants) instead of purely material values (maximum expansion of human wants and the *ad lib* multiplication of the means for their satisfaction) it would not be worth while to use the atom bomb against such people, and if one were used, it would not be able to subdue their spirit. He reiterated his conviction that *if the four hundred millions of India did half an hour's daily sacrificial spinning, with full observance of the conditions he had laid down for it, within a few years it would produce a result which would be nothing short of miraculous.*

"Europe today claims to be in the vanguard of progress. But there was a time when Asia occupied that proud position. Today Asia has been overwhelmed by the glamour of Western culture which is based upon material force. . . . It is my endeavour to resuscitate our ancient culture which is essentially rooted in non-violence and spiritual values. If we succeed, we shall become a beacon light to a world that is sick of strife and yearns for peace."

Referring to the missionary activity in India, he pointed out how the temptation offered by the political subjection and exploitation of the Indian masses under foreign rule had vitiated the missionaries' outlook. Under an ideal Government every individual should have the opportunity to live with the full dignity of a human being. But India had fallen upon evil times. The Christian missionaries professed to have come for the philanthropic service of the poor. But what was their record? Among a people ground down by poverty and exploitation, they had set up hospitals and schools to pervert them from their ancestral faith, which intrinsically was by no means inferior to theirs, by offering secular temptations. "And all this is made possible by our subjection under alien rule. I live in the hope that after independence we shall be able to set our house in order and a revitalised India will make missionary bodies also reorientate their outlook and activities."

The visitors were struck by the truth of his observation. They said: "We now realise your objection to imperialistic exploitation and its concomitant the proselytising activity of the Christian missions. The two are interrelated. We cannot think of any other figure in history with which to compare you. Like saints of old, you feel the anguish of the world's sorrow and have your happiness in the happiness of mankind. We feel exalted in spirit by your words of wisdom."

All the time that this conversation was going on, Gandhiji was busy plying his wheel. Spinning finished, he lay down and had his abdominal mud-pack. He explained to his somewhat puzzled visitors its meaning: "This body is not mine, it is a trust from God. As a faithful steward, I have to preserve it so as to get the best out of it for the service of His creation. This mud-pack is an aid to that process!"

A group of Socialists was the next to come. A chronic quarrel separated the Socialists from Congress leadership. The differences between the two groups were temperamental as well as ideological. Gandhiji provided a golden bridge between the two. The Socialists were full of vituperation against the Congress High Command for accepting the partition plan. Gandhiji tried to impress upon them that now that the foreigner was quitting and power was to be transferred to Indian hands, they would ill serve the country and jeopardise the newly won independence if instead of showing a cooperative spirit they persisted in their obstructionist tactics. If they did

not approve of what was being done by the Congress High Command, they should meet and reason with them and resolve the difference in a friendly way. "But our worst shortcoming is that if someone differs from us on any issue, we are quick to misunderstand and instead of trying to get under his skin and regarding the issue from his angle, we begin to denounce him and run him down. In the result fissures deepen, rivalries grow up, principles are forgotten in the clash of personalities; instead of national unity there is a chaos of factions and isms." Pakistan was the bitter fruit of this factionalism. He was afraid, said Gandhiji, the Socialist friends had not understood the ABC of Socialism. Why could not they see that there could be no Socialism in India so long as they were in the octopus grip of communalism? "Note down these words of an old man past the age of three score and ten: in the times to come people will not judge us by the creed we profess or the label we wear or the slogans we shout but our work, industry, sacrifice, honesty and purity of character. They will want to know what we have actually done for them. But if you do not listen, if taking advantage of the prevailing misery and discontent of the people, you set about to accentuate and exploit it for party ends, it will recoil upon your head and even God will not forgive you for your betrayal of the people."

The round of visitors went on till evening. By half past five he seemed to be utterly exhausted. He attributed his indisposition to the repeated mental shocks administered to him by the news and sight of the people's suffering and misery. "When I hear reports of people being done to death in cold blood, of children being slaughtered, women violated, homes and property wantonly destroyed, it convulses my whole being. That is why I am telling everybody that this is no time for engaging in wordy dialectics. It is time to go in the midst of uprooted humanity and try to assuage its misery."

He could retire only after half-past eleven. Before going to sleep, he remembered that regular record of his daily sacrificial spinning was not being kept. But there can be no hocus-pocus or make-believe in spiritual striving. Everything must be straight, tangible, clear-cut. The omission, therefore, was inexcusable. Immediately he called his attendant and instructed her to make good the lack forthwith. Having arranged for the presentation of the "true account" to his Maker, he lay down and was immediately asleep.

> "For note, when evening shuts,
> A certain moment cuts
> The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
> A whisper from the west
> Shoots — 'Add to the rest,
> Take it and try its worth: here dies another day.' "

The next day—8th June—a group of Communists was announce-ed. Gandhiji gave them too a bit of his mind. They should put their ism behind them, he told them, and think in terms of the concrete problems facing the country—problems about which there could be no difference of opinion and the solution of which everybody admitted as being vital to the existence of India as a nation—and cooperate in their solution without any mental reservation or a desire to make political capital out of it. "You waste your time and energy in hair-splitting, fault-finding and picking holes. If you discover a trifling flaw any-where—real or fancied—you exploit it to make propaganda and spread disaffection against the Government in power without even caring to make a proper inquiry. It seems to have become your stock-in-trade. Is there no activity of the present Government whatever which is worthy of your cooperation or which you can approve of ? Think for a moment what you would do if you were in Pandit Nehru's place. Either you should be prepared to shoulder the responsibility which Pandit Nehru and the Sardar are shouldering, or you should cooperate with them. I undertake that they will vacate office and make room for you the moment you are prepared to take charge of the administra-tion and run it. It will do you good. But if you will do neither, you should at least refrain from indulging in untruthful propaganda. You profess lofty principles but your conduct belies them because you seem to make no distinction between truth and falsehood, justice and in-justice. What to me is even more pathetic is that you regard Russia as your spiritual home. Despising Indian culture, you dream of plant-ing the Russian system here. Food, however rich, that another person eats, cannot sustain me. I can be sustained only by what I eat. In the same way, what an outside power does gives me no satisfaction as it seems to give you.

"Then you talk about practising Satyagraha! Anybody who talks about Satyagraha must first realise the elementary condition attaching to it. The basis of Satyagraha is truth. There is no room in it for the ambiguous middle. A Satyagrahi may not ride two horses, truth and untruth, at the same time nor, to change the metaphor, trim his sail to catch every breeze as you do in the name of Communism. In other words, there must be no temporising with principles for the sake of expediency. A Satyagrahi must ceaselessly strive to realise and live truth. He must never contemplate hurting anyone by thought, word or deed. Transparent sincerity and flawless purity must characterise every action of his.

"You all claim to be servants of the country," he continued. "As such, it is up to you to shed narrow party-feeling and show a spirit of cooperation with all those who have the good of the country at heart, so that India might once more attain the pinnacle of great-ness which she once held in the world."

Having administered to them his fatherly rebuke, he next addressed himself to them with fatherly affection: "You are to me all like my own children. I tell you these home truths because you allow me to do so. I have spoken from the depth of my heart. You can come to me whenever you like. I need the help of all of you. I cannot accomplish anything without the cooperation of all."

How far the group were convinced is difficult to say. But they must have gone away feeling that they, too, had a share in the Father of the Nation. Later someone asked Gandhiji how he could disapprove of the Communists' activities since they aimed at the economic levelling up of the masses and the abolition of class distinctions, which he also had at heart. Gandhiji replied that his objection was to their strategy and method. These could lead only to chaos, not to an egalitarian order. "I have, therefore, not hesitated to express my disbelief in *their* Communism and lay the claim that I am a better Communist than they." Playing upon the words *samya*—equality (Samyavad—Hindustani for Communism) and *saumya*—benignity, he remarked that *samya*—Communism—had to overflow with *saumya*—non-violence—if it was to serve the ends of humanity. Secrecy was the stock-in-trade of the Communist strategy. To him it smacked of cowardice, and sabotage as advocated and practised by them was sheer vandalism. "Call it by whatever name you like, the ideal of the supreme good of entire humanity, particularly the oppressed and the disinherited ones, runs in our blood. In our morning prayer there is the verse, 'I crave neither for power nor for the joys of paradise, nor even release from the cycle of birth and death; my only aspiration is to assuage the misery of the unhappy, suffering creation.' What more can Communism give that we should be so dazzled by it and swept off our feet?"

Came two *sadhus* (religious mendicants)—not to be baulked of their share in the Father of the Nation. They joined Gandhiji in his morning walk on the 11th June. "Walking encyclopaedia" of ancient wisdom *sadhus* at one time served as people's "circulating libraries". Renouncing the world to serve humanity, they roamed about imparting in simple words and with homely similies deep spiritual knowledge and experience to the common folk. Through them, in contrast with the West, where in the lower strata the people's minds seldom reach out beyond their primary urges, the huts of the poor in India became the repositories of what Gandhiji called "the concentrated wisdom of the ages". But like many other ancient institutions, their order too had fallen upon evil times. Theirs was a case of *corruptio optimi pessima* (corruption of the best is the worst). Instead of serving society they battened upon it, claiming the "right divine" to eat the bread of idleness.

The incorrigible fisher of men, Gandhiji had never ceased to

hope to be able one day to reform and annex their order too for the selfless service of Indian humanity. Impressing upon them, the necessity of cultivating Ahimsa — the most natural and becoming attribute of a *sadhu*—he advised them to form the habit of performing, what he called, bread-labour. Unless those who claimed to be preachers of religion, took to a life of physical labour in the service of others, they would far from helping to take people Godward, only demoralise society. "Those who live carefree lives at the expense of other people's sweat, never can achieve spiritual progress. Today religion has become fossilised. . . . The corruption that is evident today in all religious orders and the mental, physical and moral deterioration of our society, are all traceable to the fact that we have looked down upon physical labour. . . . You should, therefore, map out a programme which will enable you, besides spreading the knowledge of Ramanama, to serve society, by performing body-labour and getting the masses to do the same."

* * *

Gandhiji's prayer meetings provided to the public a forum to elicit his views on the various problems confronting them and the country. Questions fell pell-mell one day concerning food shortage, his advice to non-vegetarians to confine themselves to their non-vegetarian menu in view of the pressure upon the scanty stocks of cereals and the erection of statues in his honour.

Food shortage was daily growing more acute, and there were not wanting hotheads, who in their impatience asked the people to loot foodstuffs wherever they were to be found. Referring to this Gandhiji said that everybody had a right to sufficient food to sustain him in health. There was "something rotten in the State of Denmark" if all did not get enough to eat. But those who did not get enough in spite of working hard should not, under independence, take to looting of Government grain shops or to other forms of lawlessness, since the consequence of such hooliganism would have to be borne by the people themselves. Peaceful demonstration and fasting in the last resort should be their weapons of choice.

As for the second question, there was no violation of the Ahimsa principle, or the doctrine of vegetarianism as understood by him, in asking those who were meat-eaters to confine themselves to non-vegetarian menu.[3] Vegetarianism could not be propagated by coercion but by force of example. Coercion was the opposite of both vegetarianism and Ahimsa. Similarly, internecine strife, economic exploitation of the poor in order to become rich, and suppression of women were worse than meat-eating. Meat-eaters, if they eschewed all these, would be better followers of Ahimsa than those who indulged in all these acts and prided themselves upon being vegetarians.

He loathed the erection of statues to him or hanging of his pictures. He did not feel honoured by such cheap tributes, he said, but actually felt insulted when people showing little regard for his teachings, enthusiastically voted monuments to him.

* * *

Thrice a day, if not oftener, with rhythmic regularity, Gandhiji's mail bag released a spate of personal problems, metaphysical riddles, moral conundrums, advice, praise, blame, threats, abuse and what not. It was India in miniature, providing a charmingly variegated, if at times bizarre, picture of a cross section of the public mind. One day there was a letter from a widower. He wanted to remarry, and asked for his blessings. He was sent this reply: "Hinduism has denied to women the right to remarry. Therefore, to be fair, men too ought not to remarry, much less expect or ask for my blessings. But if they must remarry, let them select as their partner a widow who is desirous of marrying. . . ."

A woman wrote that she had vowed to her deity that if she was blessed with a son, she would come and touch the Mahatma's feet! Her prayer had been answered. A son had been born to her. Would he give her the opportunity for fulfilment? Answering, Gandhiji, after commenting on the naivete and gullibility of Indian women, proceeded: "I have a partiality for daughters. God has blessed women with the strength of faith in a measure that is not given to men. So long as we cannot dispel the ignorance which makes women put male offspring above female, it won't be well with us. And for this wish-fulfilment of yours, you vowed to come to me. By the same token, you may tomorrow vow that God might give you the satisfaction of getting drunk. . . . Behind my banter is my deep anguish. Would that I could bring it home to you. Moreover, let me tell you, I possess no such power of granting wishes as you seem to think. I am an ordinary mortal, full of human weaknesses. Nevertheless my prayers are with you that God might preserve your son in good health and enable you to bring him up to serve the poor of India."

Gandhiji had made women's emancipation his special mission in life. In pursuit of it he had broken with orthodoxy and jeopardised the oldest friendships. Women had been in the vanguard of his phenomenal, non-violent mass campaign which had won India's freedom struggle. It had saddened him to note that they too were now being swept off their feet by the onset of modernism. "Women are a great power in society," he remarked one day in deep anguish. "But if they misuse their power, it can shatter to bits the whole fabric of society." He likened their power to a pistol kept in the house for protection against thieves, dacoits and wild beasts. But if a child picked it up and made indiscriminate use of it, the result would be disastrous.

Of late men, who had persistently tried to disturb the prayer meetings, finding that no notice was taken of their pranks had begun to use women as their tools. It was both cowardly and mean on men's part, Gandhiji felt, to put women to such use. He suggested that women objectors should be left alone to do whatever they liked. "I do not feel angry with them; I only feel sorry and sad. How ignorant, how gullible, how easily misled! It was they who courageously came forward in their thousands, leaving their families and children, hearths and homes, to take part in the peaceful picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops; it was they who faced *lathi*-charges and insults; even in the present trouble they are bearing the brunt of suffering. How can I be angry with them? On the contrary they have every right to be angry with me. For man has crushed womankind — I know it, having at one time played the tyrant over my own wife. And I claim to be a champion of women. I have, therefore, conceded to them the right to oppose and quarrel with me to their heart's content."

* * *

During those days filled with tribulation and inner travail Gandhiji felt the loss of Kasturba Gandhi more than ever. Divested of her earthly limitations, she stood before his mind's eye transfigured. In a letter to a woman correspondent, he drew of her idealised self this pen picture: "Ba was not behind me in any essential respect. If anything she stood above me. But for her unfailing cooperation I might have been in the abyss. . . . She helped me to keep wide awake and true to my vows. She stood by me in all my political fights and never hesitated to take the plunge. In the current sense of the word, she was uneducated; but to my mind she was a model of true education. She was a devoted *vaishnava*. But she had obliterated all feeling of caste from her mind and regarded a Harijan girl with no less affection than her own children. She personified the ideal of which Narasimha Mehta has sung in the *Vaishnavajan* hymn. There were occasions when I was engaged in a grim wrestle with death. During my Aga Khan Palace fast, I literally came out of death's jaws. But she shed not a tear, never lost hope or courage but prayed to God with all her soul."

Clothed in the radiance of the best and noblest in her character, she represented to him the best that is in Indian culture; the most perfect pattern for Indian womanhood to adopt. He gave his reasons for the apotheosis in the course of the same letter: "Women should look upon God as their only true help. This would give them self-confidence. Today they are going downhill. In the insane race of rivalry with men they have forgotten their essential *dharma*. Humility, humanity, simplicity and self-suffering are their nature. They should put to the best use these God-given gifts. The secret of the lustre

which our ancient heroines shed over the pages of history was their inner purity, penance and strength of character. So long as Indian women do not reincarnate in themselves that strength of character and purity, it will bode no good to their or India's future in spite of all their education and enlightenment."

* * *

The Delhi hot weather was at its height. Gandhiji's room in the sweepers' colony became a blazing furnace at noon. The muddy current of events swirled past him, leaving him unaffected. He was the sheath within which contradictory and even antagonistic elements grew up side by side and emerged reconciled and harmonised by the chemistry of his all-embracing love. Never was his unfailing, tender regard for others more in evidence than during those hectic days, when his own soul was passing through a deep travail of sorrow and suffering.

As a member of his secretarial staff Rajkumari Amrit Kaur had long rendered him yeoman service. In obedience to his wish she had torn herself from his side—not without a wrench — to attend to her work in the Constituent Assembly. Whenever she could, she would steal time to run to him to render whatever assistance she was capable of. When on the 8th June mid-day, she came, he reprimanded her for exposing herself to the blazing sun saying, "The work you are doing in the Constituent Assembly is also service done to me." In a note to her he wrote: "Personal service, when it merges into universal service, is the only service worth doing. All else is rubbish." He insisted on her sharing his lunch with him and taking half an hour's rest before he would let her sit down to work.

Pandit Nehru came one afternoon, while he was having his usual hot drink of lemon juice and honey. He was suffering from a cold. He was physicked with a drink similar to Gandhiji's own. The prerogative of self-constituted "family physician" was exercised over all who came into contact with him and was not questioned by any — follower, friend or opponent.

He had already begun his weekly 24-hours' silence when Gopu arrived. So the two had a very animated pantomime talk. Gopu set everybody, including his grandfather, roaring with laughter by mimicking his *Bhaio aur Bahno, ap shant ho jaiye* (Brothers and sisters, please, be quiet) — words with which Gandhiji daily opened his prayer address! And so the "family physician" had his dose of "physick" at the hands of the little one!

CHAPTER XI

TURN POISON INTO NECTAR

I

AND so the candle continued to burn itself out in a reckless blaze. People's faith in Ahimsa had been destroyed. To rebuild it needed a Herculean effort. "God alone can say how much labour and time it will take," Gandhiji remarked one day and then added: "My pursuit of nature-cure has yielded me this priceless and matchless treasure — the secret of the power of Ramanama. Its magic transforms not only the body and mind; it permeates the environment — family, society, country, nay the whole world. I see it, I feel it. Daily I am getting a clearer and clearer vision of its power — the therapy of nature's five elements and its potency and greater by far the potency of Ramanama. If I can communicate to even one person what fills me, I shall be content."

Then, retreating within himself, he proceeded: "But that calls for faith. Have I that faith? My death alone will show that. If I die of illness, groaning and moaning, it will mean that my repetition of Ramanama was only a lip performance and I was a fraud. But if I am what I claim to be, then, as a logical corollary to the taking of Ramanama, I should have the strength to hail death as a deliverer and a friend as I have asked others to do."

For days his blood pressure had stood high. But he dismissed the suggestion that he should have his blood pressure taken, saying, "If I allow doctors to examine me why should I not have their treatment too? When a man begins to look for loopholes in his vows or solemn resolves, he deceives himself and God. . . . How am I to convey to you the faith that fills me? Whenever the clouds were the thickest, He showed me the way. If He wants to get work from me, He will take care of this physical body also."

"Why then do you make so much of our ailments and prescribe medical aid for us?" a companion asked.

"He alone can claim to have faith," replied Gandhiji, "who in life ceaselessly endeavours to observe the law of God. For, as I have often said, He and His law are one. The mark of a man of faith is that he is always awake and alert in every little thing. I claim to have faith in God, but then I keep my routine with clock-like

regularity in respect of eating, drinking, rest and work. You are its opposite. He who has dedicated his all to God will rigorously observe all the *yamas* and *niyamas* — disciplines and rules. And if in spite of this, ill-luck befalls him, he will remain unaffected by it."

In a letter he wrote: "He who is punctual in everything, will not fall ill and in any event will experience imperturbable calm. This is made possible by ceaseless remembrance of God's name. Let His name, therefore, abide with you always."

News from the Frontier distressed him. On being asked how he reconciled his ideal of equanimity with his all too evident distress at the daily happenings, he replied: "Equanimity does not mean insensitiveness to other people's sufferings. It means stoicism in regard to one's own — to retain one's balance and serenity under the deepest personal anguish. To withdraw (physically and mentally) from the world and all its doings, in other words to become a recluse is easy. But to identify oneself with the whole world — its joys and sorrows — and yet remain unaffected by joy or sorrow is a harder task by far. The occasion for equanimity comes when, for instance, one loses a dear and near one or a great personal calamity overtakes one. Equanimity does not consist in being indifferent to the sufferings of the poor and the helpless. On the contrary, one must feel sympathy for them and putting all thought of self behind, wear oneself out in the endeavour to alleviate their sufferings."

Peering through the surrounding darkness, as he tried to discern the shape of things to come in a flash of intuition his eye of faith detected even beneath that seething turmoil, the Law of Love at work, the people's will to peace struggling to realise itself. Of this he provided a glimpse in a letter to an American friend, Richard Gregg:

> Here things are in a melting pot. Brother is fighting brother when the English proclaim that they are withdrawing from India in 14 months' time. I am straining every nerve to prevent this wanton bloodshed. Behind this waste of blood, there are unmistakable signs of a sincere desire for peace. The result of this fight between God and Satan is a certainty. Let us all stake everything for the certainty.

His faith was vindicated two months later at Calcutta where unnoticed by any eye save his the unbelievable was already taking shape.

2

Hardly had the Congress Working Committee's decision accepting the partition plan been taken when Gandhiji began to receive letters

asking him to launch a crusade against it. One such ran: "The British are quitting India but leaving it divided and quarrelling by pitting one party against the other as was the case when they took possession of it about a hundred years back. In case you launch a struggle against the division of India on communal or Indian States basis, as communalists and certain Princes desire, I respectfully offer about one lakh . . . disciplined volunteers loyally to carry out your orders. Though they are not committed to non-violence, they shall faithfully abide by your instructions as regards their conduct."

To it he replied:

> Probably no-one is more distressed than I am over the impending division of India. But I have no desire to launch any struggle against what promises to be an accomplished fact. I have considered such a division to be wrong and therefore I could never be party to it. But when the Congress accepts such a division, even though reluctantly, I would not carry on any agitation against that institution. Such a step is not inconceivable under all circumstances. The Congress association with the proposed division is no circumstance warranting a struggle against it of the kind you have in mind. Nor can I endorse your attack upon the British. They have not in any way promoted or encouraged this step.

Another friend wrote from Dublin: "The Indians in Ireland strongly protest against the present talk of partition in India. Ireland had the same fate when the British Government was leaving this country and now the result is that the people of North and South Ireland under the leadership of Eamon-DeValera are trying their best to abolish this partition by meetings, demonstrations, etc. India will have to do the same thing if it agrees to the partition scheme. We Hindus and Muslims in this country have firm faith and belief that India can't commit political suicide by accepting division under your able leadership and guidance."

Gandhiji replied:

> I feel helpless. I do not know that a parallel between Ireland and India can be drawn. The Congress and the League have come to terms, the former, no doubt, unwillingly. That being the case, one has to do the best that is possible under the circumstances. This I am trying to do according to my lights.

Gandhiji had a wire asking him whether, in view of his strong feeling on the division of India and the fact that the Congress had become a party to it, he would not fast unto death. He answered that such fasts could not be lightly undertaken—certainly not at the

dictation of anyone, or out of anger. Was he to fast because the Congress differed from his views? For instance, the Congress seemed to favour projects of industrialisation. He saw in it no deliverance for the masses from grinding poverty. He did not believe in mill-made civilisation any more than he did in mill-made cloth. He did not believe in an army for the defence of the country. But he knew of no move from the people for the removal of that menace to the real freedom of the country. If he wanted impatiently to fast, he remarked, there were reasons enough in these and others he could enumerate to justify a fast unto death. But he realised that he had to be patient and steadfast in the midst of the fire raging round him and prove his faith in the ultimate triumph of truth.

Then there was the document that he had signed together with Jinnah and to which the Viceroy was really a party. He must watch what his two partners did before he acted. He, therefore, asked the authors of the rebuking messages to bear with the Congress, the League and with him and watch even critically and see how things were shaping. The Government belonged to the people as he belonged to them. There was ample time for them to judge their leaders and disown them if they, or any of them, were found wanting. But he hoped they would not fail them.

Still another correspondent complained that while formerly Gandhiji had proclaimed that vivisection of India would be vivisection of himself, he had since weakened. He could not plead guilty to the charge, replied Gandhiji in the course of his prayer address on the 9th June. *When he made the statement in question, he believed he was voicing public opinion. But when public opinion was against him, was he to coerce it?* The writer had also argued that Gandhiji had often declared that there could be no compromise with untruth or evil. That was true in principle, said Gandhiji. But the application must also be correct. He made bold to say that even if non-Muslim India were with him, he could show the way to undo the proposed partition. But he freely admitted that he had become, or rather was considered, a back number. They had forgotten the lesson that they had learnt for the past thirty years. They had forgotten that untruth was to be conquered by truth and violence by non-violence, impatience by patience and heat by cold. They had begun to fear their own shadows. *Many had invited him to lead the opposition. But then there was nothing in common between them and him except the opposition. The basis of his opposition seemed to be wholly different from theirs.* Could love and hate combine?

The writer of the epistle had cautioned him that the new Viceroy was more dangerous than his predecessors, who dangled before them the naked sword. The new representative had tricked the Congress into submission by his persuasive sophistry. Gandhiji wholly dissented from the view. The writer had paid a high though unintended

compliment to the Viceroy and at the same time had belittled the Congress Ministers' intellectual capacity. Why could not he see the obvious? The country—the vocal part of it—was with them. They were no fools. But they were the people's representatives in power. If the writer were in their place, perhaps things would not have been different. In any case it was not dignified to swear at the Viceroy if the leaders were ill-chosen or if the people were not true to the country. "As the king, so the people", was less true than "as the people, so the king".

To a group of foreign visitors he confided: "The partition has come in spite of me. It has hurt me. But it is the way in which the partition has come that has hurt me more. I have pledged myself to do or die in the attempt to put down the present conflagration. I love all mankind as I love my own countrymen, because God dwells in the heart of every human being, and I aspire to realise the highest in life through the service of humanity. It is true that the non-violence that we practised was the non-violence of the weak, i.e., no non-violence at all. But I maintain that this was not what I presented to my countrymen. Nor did I present to them the weapon of non-violence because they were weak or disarmed or without military training, but because my study of history has taught me that hatred and violence used in howsoever noble a cause only breed their kind and instead of bringing peace jeopardise it. Thanks to the tradition of our ancient seers, sages and saints, if there is a heritage that India can share with the world, it is this gospel of forgiveness and faith which is her proud possession. I have faith that in time to come, India will pit that against the threat of destruction which the world has invited upon itself by the discovery of the atom bomb. The weapon of truth and love is infallible, but there is something wrong in us, its votaries, which has plunged us into the present suicidal strife. I am, therefore, trying to examine myself."

A letter he dictated early next morning showed how searching was the self-examination: "If we carefully scrutinise ourselves, we shall find that much of the speech we indulge in is idle talk. . . . Not every word we utter is truth. But we have no time to keep close watch over it. In the present time particularly, silence is golden. Deeds, not words, are what is demanded of us. 'Silence covers all' is a sound maxim. *He who wants to see Truth and take shelter in God must observe at least one day of weekly silence.*" (Italics mine).

In an introspective vein he proceeded to enumerate signs of God's grace which was sustaining him in his difficult ordeal. "I have passed through many an ordeal in my life. But perhaps this is to be the hardest. I like it. The fiercer it becomes, the closer is the communion with God that I experience and the deeper grows my faith in His abundant grace. So long as it persists, I know it is well with me."

Another sign of God's grace was that despite her ill-health, Manu, upon whom he had imposed heavy responsibility, was able to carry on. "I work her beyond her capacity. . . . But God seems to sustain her in spite of it all as if to help me in my hour of trial. Still another sign of His grace is the way in which He is keeping up my physical strength and enabling me to maintain my serenity in the midst of daily shocks and turmoil. For sixty years I have been in the thick of the fight. I am realising it daily."

And he recited a verse from the Ashram prayer: "Adversity so-called is not adversity, nor is prosperity what we know by that name; the only adversity is to forget God, the only prosperity His ceaseless remembrance."

His rumination continued. "To seek God one need not go on a pilgrimage or light lamps and burn incense before or anoint the image of the deity or paint it with red vermilion. For he resides in our hearts. *If we could completely obliterate in us the consciousness of our physical body, we would see Him face to face.*"

During his morning walk two Hindu Mahasabha youths came and began excitedly to say, "You are no Mahatma. You are making the Hindus weak by preaching Ahimsa to them. You should not mislead them." Gandhiji smiled. Then pushing away the two girls who were serving as his "walking sticks", he affectionately put his hands on the shoulders of the newcomers instead. They felt so overwhelmed by this that they began to tremble and one of them asked his forgiveness even before he had spoken. After a while Gandhiji said to them: "You do not know I repudiated the title of Mahatma long before you questioned it. But may be out of your concern for me, you feel it necessary to put me on my guard lest I should fall into the dotage of old age." He repeated to them that if people did not know how to face death non-violently, they could by all means die fighting valiantly. But even if they wanted to avenge wrong-doing in Pakistan, the right way was to go to Pakistan and fight with those who were the authors of it. There could be no bravery in taking cowardly reprisals on the Muslims residing in India.

> I say the same thing to Pakistan, too. In England they managed to survive when odds seemed all against any chance of survival. The secret of it was their wonderful unity, national discipline and organisation. For betrayal of the country, father did not hesitate to send his son to the gallows. But in India, even after partition, Hindus and Sikhs are quarrelling among themselves. Each wants to go his way. Nobody listens. Where shall it all end? We, old leaders, are like autumn leaves. Tomorrow you shall have to shoulder the whole burden. It is up to you, youth, therefore, to shed your indifference, inertia and sloth and

throw yourselves into constructive work with all your heart and soul.

After the young men had left, Gandhiji turned to Dr. Rajendra Prasad and said : "We ought to take warning from this. If I could free myself from here, I would like to tour all over the country and launch a new movement among the youth to throw themselves into constructive work. I can see their enthusiasm to do something for the country. But it is getting no sustenance and there is every danger of its running into a wrong channel. I sensed the malady from which our country is suffering long ago. We, top leaders, are getting old. Before we pass away, we should devote whatever strength God has given us to train younger people to shoulder the responsibility of building up the India of our dreams just as we trained them before as non-violent soldiers for the freedom struggle. People cannot be trained for the serious tasks ahead unless at least a portion of the top-ranking leaders remain outside the Government to work among the people."

In the bathroom that day, he had an attack of giddiness and but for his attendant's presence of mind would have fallen in a faint. Up from half past two in the morning and at work the livelong day without a moment's respite he had drawn far too heavily upon his physical reserves that were already well-nigh depleted through overwork and worry. So great, however, was his consideration for others that when in five minutes he came to, he gave strict instructions, as he had done on previous occasions, that not a word about what had happened was to be breathed to anybody. Rajaji and G. D. Birla were, however, waiting outside the bathroom. They were visibly disturbed to notice the pallor on his face as he came out.

3

Reports had assiduously been circulated that Gandhiji had differed from his colleagues and in the All-India Congress Committee would raise his voice against the Working Committee's decision. It was a case of the wish being father to the thought. Giving a quietus to these wishful reports Gandhiji remarked in one of his post-prayer speeches that he might differ from the Working Committee in regard to partition. This to be sure he did. But having stated that fact, he would recommend for acceptance the decision that the Committee had arrived at. His sense of discipline as well as loyalty to the cause demanded it. Under the constitution, the A.-I.C.C. delegated its authority to the Working Committee. They could not, therefore, lightly discard the Working Committee's decisions. Supposing the Working Committee signed a

promissory note on behalf of the A.-I.C.C., the A.-I.C.C. had to honour it. It was open to them to remove the Working Committee, if it was found to have made a serious mistake and was unworthy of their trust and install another in its place. But they could not go back upon the decision it had already taken. They should oppose it only if it tried to mislead the public deliberately.

He had told them before that they could still mend the situation to a large extent. What should happen was that the Union of India and Pakistan should vie with each other in well doing. If Pakistan did better, the whole of India would be Pakistan, in which there would be neither majority nor minority and all would be equal. If he were the President of the Muslim League, he concluded, he would put Pakistan on the screen and make it attractive by its matchless beauty. In that case he (Gandhiji) himself would be the first to admit his mistake and commend Pakistan to everybody. "Will Jinnah Saheb do this?"

The division of India was now a certainty, so far as one could see. Gandhiji asked people not to grieve over it. If anyone had a right to grieve, it was he. But he was quite clear, there was no occasion for grief if the people of the Indian Union acted on the square. He admitted that the division having been agreed upon, unity became somewhat difficult. But assuming that the Muslims of India looked upon themselves as a nation distinct from the rest, they could not become so if the non-Muslims did not respond. The Muslim-majority areas might call themselves Pakistan, but the rest and largest part of India need not call itself Hindustan, meaning the abode of Hindus.

He supposed, continued Gandhiji, that was the reason why Pandit Nehru refused to call the non-Pakistan areas as Hindustan and loved to call it instead by the proud name of the Indian Union. But history had shown that possession of a proud name did not make the possessor great. Men and groups were known not by what they called themselves but by their deeds. How was the Indian Union going to behave? The caste Hindus were on their trial. Did they realise their responsibility to the lowliest and the least in the Union? Would they do their obvious duty by affording them all the facilities to rise to the highest status? Then there were the Muslim minorities? Would they be regarded as aliens? "Heaven forbid that the caste Hindus should so behave as to prove Jinnah Saheb's thesis that the Muslims and Hindus constituted separate nations. Would they rise to the occasion and by their character, bravery, incorruptibility and toleration, prove to the Muslims of Pakistan that in the Union there was no discrimination whatsoever on the basis of religion, caste or colour?"

Again, there were people in the Union who were opposed to Hindustani (a compatible co-mingling of Hindi and Urdu). There were many holy shrines of Islam in India. Would they be honoured

equally with the others? What about the future of the Muslim seats of learning? On the right answer to these and similar other questions depended the real unity of India, and this was irrespective of what might be said or done in Pakistan. Tit for tat was the law of the brute or unregenerate man. The world was sick of the application of the law of the jungle. It was thirsting for the law of love for hate, truth for untruth, toleration for intoleration. If this law of regenerate man did not obtain in the world, the world was thrice doomed.

But even while he was trying to canalise the feelings of resentment and anger in the people's breast by his impassioned utterances, he was disturbed by an ominous shadow on the horizon. In spite of all efforts to reassure the minorities in Pakistan, there was widespread uneasiness as to their future and unrest bordering upon panic. The city and port of Karachi, like Calcutta, was predominantly a Hindu city. It owed its prosperity largely to Hindu commercial enterprise. Shikapuri merchants were famed in history for their business acumen, high commercial credit and spirit of adventure. They had made Sind the gateway of the trade with the East. Similarly, the Hindus had contributed a lion's share to the economic and cultural progress of the Sukkur Barrage basin and Tharparkar districts. They were all feeling nervous and some of them had declared their intention to leave Sind. Gandhiji said, it would be a breach of faith on the part of the Muslims and the League Government of Sind if after Jinnah's repeated assurance that in Pakistan the minority would get a square deal, a single Hindu felt compelled to leave.

Equally depressing was the news brought by refugees from Campbellpur (the Punjab). They asked him whether he could assure them that they could live there with safety. Gandhiji said he could not. How could he? Only the Muslim League and Jinnah could vouchsafe such an assurance.

Some afflicted non-Muslims from Rawalpindi saw him a few days later. Eagerly he inquired of them whether, now that Pakistan was a settled fact, there was any change for the better in the behaviour of the Muslims around them. A change there was undoubtedly, he was informed, but a change for the worse.

He was weak and therefore on very low diet. The Sardar chaffed him: "You delight in making yourself and everybody uncomfortable. If you had listened to us and agreed to go to Mussoorie (see page 199) we would all have enjoyed Mussoorie's bracing climate. But you must act by contraries."

"I would love to go to Uttara Kashi, if only you will let me," Gandhiji answered.

Thereby hung a poignant tale. His dear and revered friend Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya used often to give him glowing accounts of that holy region and of the holy men in that Himalayan beauty-spot.

He had promised Gandhiji that he would some day take him there. But death claimed him before he could redeem his pledge. The idea, however, continued to haunt Gandhiji and in later days when a damp fell round his path, he often nostalgically returned to that enchanting unrealised prospect.

The irrepressible Sardar could never forego his banter. He broke in: "So there you are! For every suggestion of ours you have a counter-suggestion ready! We tell you one thing and out you come with another!"

He could go to bed only at 11.15 at night. Early next morning after prayer, he sat down, as usual, to clear his mail. But the nib of his pen broke. A new one was sent for. That took some time. But with Gandhiji every second counted. Instead of waiting for it, he, with a pen-knife, mended the thin end of his wooden pen holder into a point and had already begun writing with it when the nib arrived.

4

The 14th June arrived at last. As in the All-India Congress Committee meeting at Bombay at the time of the Cabinet Mission's plan of 16th May, 1946, those who looked forward to a split between Gandhiji and the Congress Working Committee were doomed to disappointment. At midday on the 14th June, Pandit Nehru came to inform Gandhiji that he would be called upon to address the A.-I.C.C. in the evening. "He is transparent as crystal," remarked Gandhiji after Pandit Nehru had left. "His loyalty and affection are beyond compare. With all the ideological fights that he has had with me in the past, today he takes everything from me implicitly. He would be heart-broken if I said 'no' to him. He has made me captive of his love. That is why I have proclaimed from the housetops that I am Pandit Nehru's and the Sardar's prisoner. He combines with the heart of a child a towering intellect, wide learning and an ability which can stand comparison with any in the world. He has renunciation, too. He is quite capable of laying aside all the trappings of power as easily as a snake does its outworn skin. His tireless energy puts even the youth to shame."

In the A.-I.C.C. meeting, Gandhiji told them that they would be ill advised to throw out or amend the Working Committee's resolution on partition. The house had the right to do so. But the members must remember that the Working Committee, as their representative, had accepted the plan and it was their duty to stand by the Working Committee. His own views on the plan were well known.

In addition to the Working Committee, there were two other parties to the decision—the British Government and the Muslim League.

If at that stage the A.-I.C.C. rejected that decision, what would the world think? All the parties had accepted the partition plan and it would not be proper for the Congress to go back on its word.

If the A.-I.C.C. felt that the 3rd June plan could do only harm to the country, they could of course reject it. They must remember, however, that if they rejected or amended that resolution, it would imply lack of confidence in the President of the Congress and the Working Committee, and they would naturally resign. They would in that case have to find a new set of leaders who could not only constitute the Congress Working Committee, but also take charge of the Government. If the opponents of the resolution were sure they could find such a set of leaders, and the majority of the members shared that view, the A.-I.C.C. could reject the resolution.

The Congress was opposed to Pakistan, continued Gandhiji, and he was one of those who had steadfastly opposed the division of India. Yet he was there before them to urge the acceptance of the resolution. Sometimes certain decisions, however unpalatable, had to be taken. Members must, however, not forget that peace in the country was essential in that juncture. Those who talked in terms of an immediate revolution, or an upheaval in the country, would be able to achieve it by throwing out that resolution, but he doubted whether they had the strength to take over the reins of the Congress and the Government. "Well, I have not that strength today or else I would declare rebellion single handed."

The reference was to his own failing health and the inadequacy which he had discovered in the practice of non-violence by the Congress and the people at large. He could not, in that juncture, think of starting all over again from scratch by himself.

He emphasised that he was not pleading on behalf of the Working Committee. The house must weigh the pros and cons of the rejection of the resolution. It should not accept the resolution out of any false sense of moral compulsion if on merits it was not convinced. It could reject the resolution if it was sure that such a rejection would not lead to turmoil and strife in the country. But they must not forget that the members of the Working Committee were "old and tried servants of the nation with a proud record of achievement to their credit, who had hitherto constituted the backbone of the Congress," and it would be "most unwise" if not impossible to replace them at that stage.

He admitted that what had been accepted was not good but he was sure they could turn it to good account. Out of mistakes sometimes good emerged. Rama was exiled because of his father's mistake. But ultimately his exile resulted in the defeat of Ravana, the wicked. He hoped the A.-I.C.C. was capable of extracting good out of what was undoubtedly a defective plan, even as gold was extracted from dirt.

Elucidating his meaning further, he said that the plan put both Hinduism and Islam on trial. It afforded them an opportunity to disprove Jinnah's theory that the Muslims were a separate nation and were something apart from the Hindus. Even the smallest minority should feel secure and happy in India. He asked the members to shed all fear. Nothing could go wrong if they were honest, sincere and straightforward.

Pandit Nehru's speech revealed—what had all along been suspected—that it was the Interim Government's helplessness, owing to sabotage from within by the League members in the Government and retention of control by the British, to cope with the spreading anarchy that had driven the Congress High Command to desperation, so that they were glad to escape from the intolerable situation they found themselves in, even by paying the price of partition. The Congress leaders were past the prime of their lives. After a quarter of a century of wandering in the wilderness they had come within sight of the Promised Land. They were doughty warriors and were not afraid, if necessary, to take the plunge once more. But they were afraid that it might not be given them to see another successful fight through and the fruit of their struggle and the countless sacrifices of a whole generation of fighters for freedom might slip through their fingers when it seemed almost within their grasp. If the hour of decision had come earlier when the Congress was in the wilderness, when they were young and before their experience in the Interim Government and the exercise of power had coloured their thinking and outlook, their choice might have been different.

There was a note of deep sorrow in Pandit Nehru's reference to the partition of the Punjab and Bengal. The most immediate problem before them was to "arrest the swift drift towards anarchy and chaos". It was sufficient to compare what had happened in Noakhali and Calcutta with what had happened in Bihar. By a supreme effort, the Congress was able to control the situation in Bihar but they could do nothing in the Punjab. Why did such things happen in the Punjab and why was the Khizar Ministry broken, and how was it that no-one seemed capable of controlling the Punjab disturbances? The answer was patent. The British were leaving. They were no longer interested. "This probably explains why some officers asked the victims who went to them for help to go to Pandit Nehru or Sardar Patel. They were not desirous of shouldering any further responsibility and many had become callous." They felt, remarked Pandit Nehru, that in the circumstance, partition was better than murder of innocent citizens.

Had the Congress abandoned the Sikhs and Hindus of West Punjab and Hindus of East Bengal by agreeing to the division of the Punjab and Bengal? An answer, admitted Pandit Nehru rather

apologetically, should no doubt be found, but the Congress would not be able to help them by high sounding resolutions. Even when the Punjab was one, they had found they were not able to help the people of the Punjab. He had nothing much to say about Sind. He was much worried about the Frontier Province. If West Punjab went out of India, the Frontier would be isolated.

Pandit Nehru revealed how they had tried to get the British Government to agree to let them function as a Dominion Government by convention during the transition period. But the composition of the Interim Government was such that no agreement could work and no convention could be established. The Viceroy, therefore, suggested the 3rd June plan and the Congress accepted it. *This plan was not an imposed award unlike one of those old decisions of the British Government which they could accept or reject.* From the practical and legal point of view, India, as an entity, continued to exist except that certain Provinces and parts of Provinces now sought to secede. The Government of India was intact. There should be no further confusion of "Hindustan" and "Pakistan" and people should not allow such ideas to grow.

Sardar Patel confirmed what Pandit Nehru had said that they had to accept partition because no other door had been left open to them to get rid of the obstructionism of the Anglo-Muslim League combine within the administration which threatened the country with sabotage. He fully appreciated the apprehensions of their brothers from Sind; nobody liked the division of India and his heart was heavy. But there were stark realities of which they had to take notice. *The choice was whether there should be just one division or many divisions. The Congress must face facts. It could not give way to emotionalism and sentimentality.* It must coolly assess the pros and cons and arrive at a decision. The Cabinet Mission plan of 16th May, 1946, no doubt gave them a united India. But there was a snag in it. That plan could not be executed if one or the other party withheld cooperation. Thus it was in the nature of an imposed award. Had they accepted that plan, the whole of India would have gone the Pakistan way. (But had not Gandhiji often told them that nobody could impose anything upon them if relying on non-violence alone they were prepared to face anarchy in preference to British peace?)

Sardar Patel denied that the Working Committee had accepted the plan out of fear. They had never known fear. *But he was afraid of one thing and that was that all their toil and hard work of these many years should not go to waste or prove unfruitful.* They had worked for independence and they should see to it that as large a part of the country as possible became free and strong. Otherwise there would be neither Akhand Hindustan nor Pakistan.

His nine months in office, Sardar Patel continued, had completely disillusioned him regarding the supposed merits of the Cabinet

Mission's plan of 16th May, 1946. He had noticed that, except for a few honourable exceptions, Muslim officials, right from the top down to the chaprasis were all working for the Muslim League. "There should be no mistake about it. Mutual recrimination and allegations were the order of the day." Under that plan the whole of India would have been subjected to an intolerable situation. The communal veto, which was given to the League, would have arrested India's progress at every stage. The whole administration would have gone to the dogs while the majority would have had to helplessly stand and look on.

The Congress was opposed to Pakistan, Sardar Patel proceeded, yet the resolution before the house accepted partition. Whether the A.-I. C. C. liked it or not, there was already Pakistan in action both in the Punjab and in Bengal. Under the circumstances he would prefer real Pakistan because then they would have some sense of responsibility.

The concluding portion of the Sardar's speech laid bare the root of the difference that in the crucial hour had made the Congress High Command part company with Gandhiji. Freedom was coming, he said. *They must build up industries. They must build up the army and make it efficient and strong.*

At the end of a nine hours' debate, Acharya Kripalani, the Congress President, brought, the session to a close with a personal explanation. He had been to some riot-affected areas. In one place he had seen a well into which women with their children, 107 in all, had thrown themselves to save their honour. In another place, a place of worship, 50 young women were killed by their menfolk for the same reason. "I have seen heaps of bones in a house where 307 persons, mainly women and children, were driven by the invading mob, locked up and then burnt alive. These ghastly experiences have no doubt affected my approach to the question. Some members have accused us of having taken this decision out of fear. I must admit the truth of this charge, but not in the sense in which it is made. The fear is not for the lives lost or of the widows' wail or the orphans' cry or of the many houses burnt. The fear is that if we go on like this, retaliating and heaping indignities upon one another, we shall progressively reduce ourselves to a state of cannibalism and worse. . . . Hinduism for me has stood for toleration, for truth and for non-violence, or at any rate for the clean violence of the brave. If it no longer stands for these ideals and if in order to defend it people have to indulge in crimes worse than cannibalism, then I must hang down my head in shame. And I may tell you that often I have felt and said that in these days one is ashamed to call oneself an Indian."

"I have been with Gandhiji for the last 30 years," Acharya Kripalani continued. "I have never swayed in my loyalty to him. It is not a personal but a political loyalty. Even when I have differed

from him I have considered his political instinct to be more correct than my elaborately reasoned attitudes. Today also I feel that he, with his supreme fearlessness, is correct and my stand is defective."

"Why then am I not with him?" the Congress President asked.

> Because I feel that Gandhiji has as yet found no way of tackling the problem on a mass basis. When he taught us non-violent non-cooperation, he showed us a definite method which we had at least mechanically followed. Today he himself is groping in the dark. He was in Noakhali. His efforts eased the situation. Now he is in Bihar. The situation again has eased. But this does not solve in any way the flare-up in the Punjab. He says he is solving the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity for the whole of India in Bihar. May be. But it is difficult to see how that is being done. There are no definite steps, as in non-violent non-co-operation, that lead to the desired goal. And then unfortunately for us today though he can enunciate policies, they have in the main to be carried out by others, and these others are not converted to his way of thinking.

It was in these painful circumstances, concluded Acharya Kripalani, that he had supported the division of India.

Going over the Congress President's speech, in retrospect, one finds in it not the failure of Ahimsa but a plain confession of the inadequacy of non-violence based only upon intellectual belief. Viewing the ghastly scene before him with the eye of the intellect, he was appalled at the prospect of unsafety it unfolded. Gandhiji surveying the same with the eye of faith discerned safety in unsafety. In the end they all found, including the Congress President, alas! when it was too late, that the "unsafe" was the only safe course and in "unsafety" lay their safety. Two years later, on 16th October, 1949, Pandit Nehru declared before an audience in New York that [redacted] if they had known the terrible consequences of partition in the shape of killings etc., they would have resisted the division of India. "It was a big mistake on our part not to have listened to Bapu at that time," confessed Maulana Azad. "If only we had known!" exclaimed Dr. Rajendra Prasad. As for Acharya Kripalani, his choicest epithets in later years were reserved for those in the Congress High Command on whom he put the entire responsibility for partition — so far had his own mind travelled from the position he took up in that fateful session of the All-India Congress Committee meeting in June, 1947.

On count being taken, the Working Committee's resolution was adopted by 157 voting for, 15 against.

The work of partition thereafter proceeded at break-neck speed. On 20th June the partition of Bengal was decided upon by the members

of the Bengal Legislative Assembly from the Hindu majority areas of Bengal. Three days later the partition of the Punjab was similarly decided upon. The Sind Assembly at a special meeting decided by a majority of votes to join the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. The members of the Shahi Jirga of Baluchistan (excluding the Sardars nominated by the Kalat State) and the non-official members of the Quetta Municipality at a special meeting on 29th June decided to join Pakistan—non-Muslim members abstaining. That left the North-West Frontier Province, about which Pandit Nehru felt worried, which Sardar Patel had decided would have to be written off, and which Gandhiji felt must be saved for non-violence and the Pathans. Events were shaping in that unfortunate Province for the biggest tragedy of the partition.

CHAPTER XII

'A BASTARD SITUATION'

1

To LORD ISMAY, the chief of the Viceroy's personal staff, the North-West Frontier Province represented "a bastard situation" — a Muslim-majority Province with a Congress Ministry in office. Why the situation should have been so branded is difficult to understand. The Khan Saheb Ministry not only commanded an absolute majority but had the support of the majority of the Muslim members, too, in the Frontier Assembly. The only explanation is to be found perhaps in the habit the British conservative mind had developed of equating Indian National Congress with Hindu; Hindus and Muslims being two distinct "nations" and the British heaven-appointed umpires to hold the balance of justice even between the two! It was to challenge that assumption that the "Quit India" movement had been launched, and while in theory the Labour Government in the United Kingdom had shed that assumption by its declaration of 20th February, 1947, in fact and effect old modes of thought persisted under the new dispensation and the old friend reappeared with a new face.

This is not to say that an anomalous situation did not obtain in the Frontier Province. But it was anomalous with a difference; the anomaly being wholly of British making. A duel system of administration obtained in the Frontier Province. The Governor was the constitutional head of the Provincial Government. But in the matter of the tribal areas, he acted as the Agent of the King's representative. In the former capacity, he was required to act on the advice of the popular Ministers, but as the Agent of the King's representative, he was outside the jurisdiction of his Ministers and had direct dealings with the Viceroy. Again, under the doctrine of "the inseparability of the Districts and the Tribal territory", whilst the higher civilians were supposed to be under the Ministry in regard to their functions as District Magistrates, the same officers as Administrators of the tribal territory were answerable directly to the Political Department. In practice they went over the Ministers' head, and sometimes took action even without their knowledge, and did not trouble about the sanction of the legislature.

The North-West Frontier Province with its adjoining tribal areas traditionally constituted the "no man's land" which could be used

as a training ground to keep the Imperial fighting forces in trim. To the young ambitious army officer it represented an ideal "shooting preserve" where, untramelled by international conventions, he could engage in a little filibuster on his own to gain military experience. The Political Department regarded it as its *sanctum sanctorum* where British personnel could be initiated into Imperialist diplomacy. The British element and especially the Political Department and the Army in the Frontier Province had, therefore, never taken kindly to the coming of the Congress into power. They used the tribesmen as an "invisible lever" against the Congress Ministry. The distinction between the tribal and regularly administered territory was arbitrary; the line dividing one from the other often very thin. Sometimes a mere dry *nullah* (torrent bed) constituted the boundary; one half of the members of a family falling under the jurisdiction of the one, the other half under that of the other. That made the task of administration, particularly the maintenance of law and order, extremely difficult. The whole history of the tribal raids in the Frontier and the episode of Pandit Nehru's visit to the Frontier in October, 1946, as the Vice-President of the Interim Government (see Vol. I, page 274) provide an illustration of the length to which the brass-hat clique and the Political Department in the Frontier Province could go.[1]

The deterioration of relations between the Ministry and the Political Department, represented by the Governor and the Army, was reflected in the deterioration of law and order situation in the Province. The British officers could not be depended upon to carry out the orders of the Ministry. The morale of the services was undermined. There was slackness and indiscipline from top to bottom. The result was that when the tidal wave of lawlessness engineered by the Muslim League overtook the Province, the Khan Saheb Ministry found itself in an extremely awkward situation.

Sir Olaf Caroe, the die-hard Governor of the Province at that time, had made no secret of his determination to end the "bastard situation" in the Frontier. As early as the third week of March, 1947, as Badshah Khan later revealed, he had sent for his Ministers and harrangued them: There was nothing in common between them and Congress India. They should form a coalition with the League. In that case he would give them full support. He ended by presenting them with an ultimatum: "Coalition or general election." Men of spirit, they refused to knuckle under.

This then was the state in the British imperialist's prize Province when Lord Mountbatten, the new Viceroy, arrived in India in the last week of March, 1947. Adducing the League's "civil disobedience" campaign — a euphemism for murder, loot, arson and rape — as a justification for its demand for the dismissal of the Khan Saheb Ministry or in the alternative for holding a fresh election in the Frontier,

the Governor tried to persuade the Viceroy to concede that demand.

In the last week of April, the Viceroy paid a visit to the Frontier. The outline of his first draft plan was in his mind if not in his pocket. The holding of a fresh election in the Frontier Province, as has already been noted, was almost a *sine qua non* of it, and it was to clear the ground for it that the visit had primarily been planned. On the day of his arrival at Peshawar, he had a meeting with Dr. Khan Saheb and his Cabinet of four Ministers. At that meeting, the Governor actually bandied words with his Chief Minister from across the table. Privately Mountbatten told Dr. Khan Saheb that in his opinion a fresh election in the Province was necessary. Jinnah had promised him, he confided, that in the event of a fresh election being held, the League's "direct action" would be called off; there would be no violence. He had, however, made no definite commitment in that regard to the League, he assured him, and would, in fact, be telling them that nothing would be yielded to violence. Dr. Khan Saheb should trust his integrity.

The same day, according to a promise which he had made to Jinnah in Delhi, Lord Mountbatten met the League leaders, who were for the purpose released from prison where "direct action" had landed them. As a sequal to it they were further allowed, on parole, to go to Delhi for consultation with Jinnah.

The next day on his way back, near Rawalpindi (Punjab), Mountbatten saw with his own eyes the results of the communal violence let loose by the Muslim League organisation. The devastation in the Hindu and Sikh quarters in the locality, in the words of his Press Attache, was "as thorough as any produced by fire-bomb raids in the war". The Muslims of the area seemed to be "quite pleased with themselves".[2]

No wonder the League was not anxious to cry halt to its campaign of lawlessness which instead of jeopardising its political demand allowed it to get away with one extraordinary concession after another. "Direct Action" campaign in the Frontier was never called off. On the 7th May, Jinnah issued a statement that he "approved" of the decision of the Frontier Muslim League not to call off the movement.

The Frontier Province is a land of anomalies. Under the system of double rule in that Province it was not an unusual thing for the administration to do with the right hand what the left hand knew nothing about. Taking advantage of Mountbatten's visit, the League staged a demonstration. While the Viceroy and party were sitting in Government House, some highly agitated police officers came in to the Governor and told him in Mountbatten's presence that an uncontrollable mass of "green shirts" (the Muslim League volunteers), determined to see the Viceroy, were advancing on Government House. A hurried consultation between the two Excellencies followed.

Should the soldiers be called out to bar their advance or should they be allowed to advance into the grounds? Mountbatten was confronted with an extremely difficult situation, but though warned that he might be shot at he went out to the crowd with his wife at his side. The crowd cheered the brave couple.

A crisis was thus averted but the Ministry felt very sore. They were convinced that this was a filibuster planned by the Political Department, with or without the connivance of the Governor, to impress upon the new Viceroy the magnitude of the support their protege, the Muslim League, commanded in the Province. It had certainly that appearance and the past record of the Political Department did not rule out such a possibility.

Sir Olaf did another strange thing. He sent a garbled version of the proceedings of a Cabinet meeting, that was held during Mountbatten's visit, to the Viceroy and refused to forward to Delhi his own Chief Minister's note embodying the correct version. It had ultimately to be sent over the Governor's head.

Why did Sir Olaf want a new election in the Frontier of all Provinces? Only a year before an election had been fought in the Frontier Province. Though it was fought on the issue of Pakistan, out of the 50 seats, the Congress had won 32. These included 21 out of 38 Muslim seats. All the 9 Hindu seats and 2 out of 3 Sikh seats, of course went to the Congress.

The Governor argued that the "violent demonstrations throughout the Province" indicated a lack of confidence in the Ministry. A spirited rejoinder came from Badshah Khan. During the six years of war when the British existence was menaced there was no trouble in the Frontier Province. The British then needed peace and there was peace. And now, while the British power in the North-West Frontier looked on, hundreds of people were being butchered, and thousands orphaned and rendered homeless. Instead of taking firm measures for which their Ministers had asked, lawlessness was used as an excuse for their removal though they had been returned to power by an overwhelming majority of the voters and still commanded a majority in the legislature!

In a statement issued on the 4th May, 1947, from Delhi, Acharya Jugal Kishore, the General Secretary of the Congress, and Dewan Chamanlal, whom Pandit Nehru had sent to Frontier Province, reported:

> We have recently returned from a tour of the Frontier Province and what we have seen . . . has shocked us beyond measure. . . . There is no doubt that the adherents of the Muslim League have utilised these atrocious methods with the primary object of making it impossible for the Ministry to function, nor

> have we any doubt that what we may call the Governor's party has given direct or indirect encouragement to the law-breakers. . . . It is an open secret that the present Governor does not favour the Ministry. A man in his position, who is also the head of the Political Department, can seriously hamper the work of the Ministry since a large number of administrative officers play a dual role, being civilian administrators as well as political agents. . . .
>
> The happenings at Dera Ismail Khan were an eye-opener to us. The League agitation had practically fizzled out until it became difficult to find more than four persons to offer themselves for arrest. . . . It was obvious that the back of the agitation had been broken and all was peaceful. In this situation, secret meetings were held, people imported from the Punjab and other areas. . . . Definite information was conveyed to the authorities of the impending disaster. . . . Repeated orders were issued by the head of civilian administration for the arrest of ringleaders and repeatedly these orders were disobeyed by police officials. Indeed, even the orders of the Inspector-General of Police under the instruction of the Ministry were flouted. The flouting of these orders resulted in the agitators resorting to violence with impunity. . . . The police had ample forces at their disposal. Not a single platoon was brought into action, not a tear gas bomb thrown, not a *lathi*-charge made, not a shot fired even in the air, with the inevitable result that whole bazars were gutted and looted. . . .
>
> The Governor of the Province was fully aware of the orders given for the arrest of ringleaders and yet when he arrived, he asked one of the most prominent ringleaders to accompany him and openly fraternised with him. Quite naturally the officials who had disobeyed the orders given to them had done so knowing perfectly well that they would not be questioned or called to order.

Their conclusion was: "A Governor should be appointed in the place of Sir Olaf Caroe, who is prepared to guarantee protection to the minorities and who is in full sympathy and harmony with the present Ministry. . . . It is not the Ministry that should be dismissed, but the Governor and the officials who look to him for support, and who have failed in preserving law and order."

The Congress High Command reacted very strongly to the proposal for the dismissal of the Khan Saheb Ministry or holding a fresh election in the Frontier Province. They gave notice that the whole Congress attitude towards the British Government's plan might change if there was any tampering with the Frontier Ministry.

Mountbatten thereupon made it plain to the Muslim League that he could neither countenance the dismissal of the Ministry nor agree to a fresh election unless the Congress also agreed to it. The proposal had in consequence to be dropped. In a mood of frustration the League intensified its campaign of lawlessness.

Badshah Khan scented in these developments "a big plot" engineered by the Leaguers and their "departing masters — the British". He warned: "We have set fire to our country, a fire from which we ourselves cannot escape. These things can neither help Islam nor the Muslim League nor Pakistan." And again: "It is dishonest to give a political status to the communal movement of the Muslim League, whose followers have been indulging in crime."[3] He appealed to the Muslim League "to sit down with the Khudai Khidmatgars in a joint *Jirga* (tribal council)" to tackle various important issues that were likely to crop up after the departure of the Britishers from India. "Now that the British are going, they should sit in *Jirga* with us. We can iron out our difference today if they meet us as brothers and renounce their violent methods. I shall agree to any honourable settlement among ourselves, if an earnest effort is made. Leaguers fear Hindu domination while we fear British domination. Let us meet together and convince each other. We are prepared to allay their fears. But will they in turn allay ours?"

The appeal fell on deaf ears. The League had no desire to sit down with the Congress or the Khudai Khidmatgars without the British, and come to an honourable compromise, when it could get more through the British, who continued to woo them with one side of the face, while they affected to frown over wanton acts of butchery with the other.

2

In June, 1947, the Cabinet Mission plan fell through and the partition was accepted both by the Congress and the League. Included in the new plan was an item that conceded the League demand for a referendum in the Frontier Province to decide which Dominion it would accede to in the altered situation—to India or to the new Dominion of Pakistan—in case the West Punjab opted for Pakistan. The Frontier leaders, particularly the Khan Brothers, felt that this was far too premature. The issue could not be properly decided before the two parts of India had framed their respective constitutions and their decision on the very vital question of their future relationship with the British was known. Their past experience of the British Middle East imperialist diplomacy had taught them to be extremely wary of the British connexion.[4] In a statement issued soon after the

publication of the partition plan of 3rd June, Badshah Khan observed:

> It may be a triumph for the Muslim League. It is none for Islam. There are to be two Indias with Dominion Status for each, pending the decision of the respective Constituent Assemblies. Pathans do not want Dominion Status for one day. They would prefer to frame their own constitution and . . . ally themselves to that portion of India which makes for complete independence. . . . Pathans would be friends with the whole world and enemies of none.

And again:

> The question of referendum in my opinion does not arise. But I would welcome it any day if it was to be conducted without intimidation and without outside influence. All India knows what travail the Frontier Province has recently passed through and yet may have to. . . . My advice would, therefore, be that the Frontier Province should be left alone till the political weather has cleared. It may be asked to pronounce opinion as to the choice when the two parts have decided on the issue of final independence or membership of the British Commonwealth.

The Frontier leaders felt, too, that the issue on which the verdict of the people was sought through referendum was wrong. It would serve only to confuse the Pathan mind and was sure to be exploited by the Muslim League to rouse communal passions and set up a division among the Pathans with its inevitable concomitant—civil war and blood-feuds—which they were anxious to avoid at all cost. On the other hand, if the referendum were held on the issue of Pathan autonomy, it would find all Pathans in one cry—love of freedom being common to them all. They, therefore, demanded that the people of the Frontier should be free to choose between Pakistan and Pathanistan, i. e., an autonomous self-contained unit of Pushtu-speaking people under a constitution which they themselves would frame. This Pathanistan would then decide to which part it would accede to, when the full picture of the respective constitutions of India and Pakistan was before it.

Gandhiji was in complete accord with the Khan Brothers. The issue of the proposed referendum was to be Pakistan *versus* Hindustan. In the context of the events that were taking place, this would be misconstrued by the fanatics. The Pathans would be asked, were they to be with the Hindus or with the Muslims? The Congress was not a Hindu organisation. But the Pathan mind would not be able to grasp the difference in the midst of the prevailing confusion which

was becoming worse confounded from day to day. Gandhiji, therefore, proposed that both the Congress and the Muslim League should for the time leave the Pathans alone. The Congress had already made its position clear *vis-a-vis* the Pathans. The Muslim League should be required to do likewise. "Let both honour the Pathan sentiment, and let the Pathans have their own constitution for internal affairs and administration. It would promote Pathan solidarity and avoid internal conflict, so that they would be better able unitedly to federate with Pakistan or with the Union of India. And this should be irrespective of whether there was or was not a referendum. Any premature referendum would be a leap in the dark."[5]

* * *

The Pathan is a very proud and sensitive spirit. He has a highlander's strong antipathy to being dominated by plainsmen. In the present case this feeling was further accentuated by past history. Accession to Pakistan would have meant domination by the Punjabi Muslim capitalist interests, if Pathan autonomy was not conceded. "Our Province has been swamped by the Punjabis," observed Badshah Khan after the establishment of Pakistan, "who are trying their level best to make the Pathans fight amongst themselves. Having lost a good portion of the Punjab through a communal division, the Punjabi Nawabs and big capitalists are now after our Province in order to make good their loss."

This fear of domination and exploitation by the Punjabi Muslim was not confined to the Frontier Province. It became the dominant note in the various Pakistan units after the establishment of Pakistan, nowhere more so than in East Bengal. The eastern wing of Pakistan enjoyed a numerical preponderance over the western. To neutralise this preponderance in the constitution to be framed became the main worry and headache of the constitutional pandits in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. It put a severe strain on the loyalty of the Sind Provincial Government and drove Kashmir to seek safety in affiliation with India.

But under the 3rd June plan no alteration in the terms of the referendum could be made without the League's concurrence and the Congress was not prepared at that stage to make an issue of it. Badshah Khan felt strongly that, in the circumstances, participation in the referendum was futile as well as dangerous. Nevertheless out of deference to his Congress colleagues, he agreed to put the issue to the *Jirga*.

On the political plane there is only one way of achieving success viz. to fight to win. The alternative to a successful fight is a dictated peace. The Congress High Command were of the opinion that the only way for the Pathans to save Pathan autonomy was to fight the referendum with all their might and win it. They had not Gandhiji's

"fourth dimensional" way of Satyagraha in which one stoops to conquer and wins even through defeat. The battle for the Frontier Province as a part of India in the political parlance was lost. But it never had been Gandhiji's aim to hold the Frontier Province for India but to save it for the Pathans themselves and for the ideal of non-violence. That was the uniting bond between him and the Khan Brothers. The Pathan bravery was beyond question. Khudai Khidmatgars had not taken to non-violence as a "coward's expedient". The Frontier Province, setting an example of the non-violence of the brave, could become an asset both to India and Pakistan and might one day even serve as a golden bridge between the two. To make the passage of the Frontier Province from India to Pakistan as smooth, peaceful and free from rancour as possible, all his energies accordingly were bent. To that end he tried to utilise the good offices of Lord Mountbatten, in his personal capacity. On the 6th June, 1947, in a meeting with him, he suggested that he should speak to Jinnah to the following effect:

> Now that you have got your Pakistan, would it not be wise for you to go to the N.-W.F.P. and speak to the people of the Province to whatever party they may belong, including the present Ministry and their followers? You could explain what Pakistan, which has hitherto been a vague expression, really is, and present your case in an attractive manner, in the hope that you will be able to woo them to become a Province of Pakistan, *with perfect freedom to frame their own Provincial constitution.* (Italics mine).
>
> If you are successful in your persuasion, the proposed referendum and all that it involves would be avoided. If you felt disposed to adopt this suggestion, I could, I think, give you a positive assurance that the Khan Brothers and their followers would meet you as friends and give you an attentive hearing.

But the Congress leaders were not ready to accept Gandhiji's advice in regard to the referendum in the Frontier, and so in one of his letters to the Viceroy, he wrote: "As to the referendum in the Frontier Province, I must confess that my idea does not commend itself to Pandit Nehru and his colleagues. As I told you, if my proposal did not commend itself to them, I would not have the heart to go any further with it."[6]

Nevertheless, the Viceroy spoke to Jinnah. The following correspondence ensued between Lord Mountbatten and Gandhiji on the one side and Gandhiji and Jinnah on the other:

Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji 12th June, 1947

> I spoke to Mr. Jinnah . . . and he has authorised me to reply to you as follows:

Mr. Jinnah will gladly accept your suggestion that he should visit the Frontier and put the case of Pakistan to the leaders and people up there, provided you can obtain an undertaking from the Congress that they will not interfere.

He agrees with your view that by this means a referendum can be avoided and with it the risk of bloodshed removed.

I suggest that you should now communicate directly with him in this matter. . . .

I note that you did not obtain the support of the Congress leaders to your proposal but I did promise you that whatever happened I would convey your personal views to Mr. Jinnah, and he will quite understand if you are unable to get the Congress leaders to support you.

Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten 13th June, 1947

The condition precedent to the Quaid-i-Azam accepting my suggestion is dangerous in its implication. . . . I have added 'Before he goes, no doubt, he should be assured a courteous hearing from them.' The visit, therefore, if it take place will take place for convincing and converting the Ministers and Badshah Khan and his Khudai Khidmatgars. It should in no sense be a propaganda tour.

Gandhiji to Jinnah 13th June, 1947

His Excellency Lord Mountbatten writes saying that "you will gladly accept my suggestion and put the case of Pakistan to the leaders and the people there, provided I can obtain an undertaking from the Congress that they will not interfere." I do not know what you mean by the undertaking that they will not interfere.

Jinnah to Gandhiji 13th June, 1947

I am in receipt of your letter of 13th June and I thought it was quite clear what I meant that the Congress should undertake that they will not interfere with the people of the Frontier in any way whatsoever.

This in the context of the situation in the Frontier Province would have meant that the Congress organisation should lay an embargo upon itself, leaving the field clear to Jinnah, who would go to the Frontier Province not to woo the Ministry and the Khudai Khidmatgars but to tell them that now that the Congress had deserted them, the only thing for them was to accept his terms. For Congress to be party to such a proposal would have been tantamount to committing political suicide, apart from the ignominy of deserting those who had

stood by it in the freedom struggle through thick and thin for over twenty years and paid, without flinching, in "blood, sweat and tears" in a manner that has few parallels. Gandhiji's reply ran:

Bhangi Colony,
New Delhi
14th June, 1947

Dear Quaid-i-Azam,

I had hoped that His Excellency had not clearly understood your meaning. I now see that I was mistaken. I cannot ask the Congress to commit harakiri.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

3

The Frontier question brought to a head Gandhiji's differences with the Congress High Command. Sardar Patel had an hour's talk with him on the night of the 6th June. Next day Gandhiji wrote to Pandit Nehru:

> The oftener we meet the more convinced I am becoming that the gulf between us in the thought world is deeper than I had feared. He (the Sardar) says that you are largely responsible for the present situation. He is of the opinion that Badshah Khan's . . . influence is on the wane. Badshah Khan has not left any such impression on me. Whatever he is today, he was always. There is undoubtedly more steadiness today than before. I also feel that Dr. Khan Saheb and his colleagues would be nowhere without the Badshah. He alone counts in so far as the Congress influence is concerned.

Referring to his conversation with Mountbatten on the previous day, he continued:

> If the Quaid-i-Azam does not go to the Frontier and does not woo the Badshah, his brother and his other colleagues, the Frontier Ministry should resign and so also the Parliamentary majority on the sole ground that a referendum at this moment must lead to bloodshed and probably, if not certainly, to *a lasting blood-feud*, which they should avoid in so far as it is humanly possible. Amrit (Rajkumari Amrit Kaur) tells me that you think to the contrary. You think the referendum should take place now. . . . You are also of opinion that a referendum will not cause bloodshed, indeed that my proposal would be more likely to cause it. I do

not share this view. *I had told the Badshah that if I do not carry you with me, I shall retire at least from the Frontier consultation and let you guide him.* I will not and cannot interpose myself between you and him. After all, was it not you who brought him to me? You will now decide and tell me. (Italics mine).

Pandit Nehru's appreciation of the situation was set down in an extremely able and lucid note. The gist of it was that due largely to the Muslim League agitation and partly to the insistence of the Governor, the question arose about two months ago regarding fresh elections and Section 93 regime. This was strongly objected to by the Congress High Command and the idea of holding elections or of having Section 93 was given up. The Muslim League agitation in the Frontier had in many ways been encouraged by the British and Indian officials. It could easily have been dealt with if this support had been lacking:

> There is no doubt that the Governor and many of the Frontier officials have not only not cooperated with the Provincial Government but have actually sometimes obstructed its work. Their sympathies lie with the leaders of the Muslim League movement in the Frontier Province, many of whom are old loyalists of the British Government with whom they have had previous contacts. . . . A certain difficulty had arisen in the past few months in regard to these officials. It was well known that they were going, though the date was not fixed. Owing to public controversies about them the matter ceased to be one of removal of one or two particular men but became an issue affecting nearly all the officials there. The result was that even individuals, who might have been removed, continued. In any event they are nearly all leaving the Frontier soon and we must proceed on that basis. There is no particular point in our raising this issue of en-masse withdrawal now.[7]

The question of referendum, the note proceeded, came up "not exactly on the Pakistan issue" but in view of certain changes and developments in the all-India situation. Even then the stand taken by the Congress High Command was that "apart from other things, there could be no proper election till the Muslim League agitation was withdrawn completely and the consent of the Provincial Government taken." Later the main plan for changes in India was developed. The result of this was likely to be that Western Punjab would secede from the Union and this would mean that the Frontier Province was physically cut off from the Indian Union:

> A new situation thus arose and it was again stated that in view of this new situation it would be advisable to have a

> referendum in the Frontier in order to determine to which Constituent Assembly the N.-W.F.P. desired to belong. The proposal, therefore, was not just meant for the N.-W.F.P., but became part of a larger plan which provided for referendum in the N.-W.F.P., Baluchistan and Sylhet. It seemed a logical and reasonable proposal apart from the particular circumstances prevailing.

> The question of having a referendum in the Frontier Province thus depended on "certain previous decisions" in the Punjab and Bengal. "But in all likelihood parts of Bengal and the Punjab will decide in favour of secession and so we may take it as almost granted that the question will arise for decision in the N.-W.F.P. The present position is that the British Government and the Viceroy are definitely committed to this referendum. *Some of us are also more or less committed. . . . The question of referendum, therefore, appears to be a settled one and it is not quite clear how we can get out of it.* For the Viceroy it is still more difficult. Any change in the plan . . . may even lead to conflict on a big scale. We may, therefore, take it as a settled fact that a referendum will take place." (Italics mine).

In order to ensure peaceful conditions during the referendum, Pandit Nehru explained, it was proposed that "it should be organised by British military officers to be imported from outside. . . . The Provincial Government would be closely associated with the machinery for this referendum." Normally speaking, Pandit Nehru did not think that there was much chance of "any big violent conflict".

Pandit Nehru was not sure what the result of such a referendum would be. But it seems, on his return from the Frontier Province, the Viceroy had mentioned to him that a number of British officials from the Governor downwards, who were antagonistic to the Congress, had expressed their opinion that the chances were 50:50 and that the referendum might well result in a victory for the Congress though this was not by any means certain.

The proposal that the people of the Frontier should be allowed to vote for sovereign independence raised certain difficulties: "The Viceroy said he can only agree if the parties agree. . . . It may also introduce an element of confusion in the voting when three issues are before the voter. . . . Votes may well be split."

As for the suggestion that the Frontier Congress should keep out of the referendum, Pandit Nehru argued that it would mean "accepting the Muslim League's dominance in the N.-W.F.P.—in effect a surrender to the Muslim League agitation."

> Whether it will lead to peaceful conditions or not, it is difficult to say. But I imagine that any such waiver or surrender is

even more likely to lead to conflict and bloodshed because the Muslim League would celebrate this surrender as a great victory for the League. . . . They would be justified then in claiming that the present Ministry does not represent the bulk of the population. . . . It seems difficult for the Provincial Ministry to continue after a decision has been given against them by a referendum or by a waiver of referendum. . . . Possibly, the question would immediately arise of another election to the Provincial Legislature. Having avoided the referendum . . . we do not avoid trouble and difficulty and the Provincial Ministry cannot continue. The election takes place anyhow with all its possible evil consequences. . . . The only other course is a peaceful submission to the Pakistan idea, and I doubt very much if most of the Pathans will agree to it.

The future of the Frontier Province for some considerable time, Pandit Nehru concluded, was going to be decided and to keep away from the referendum "would be to ensure a wrong decision" and that too "not by the ordinary democratic process but by private arrangement." Pandit Nehru's note proceeded:

> This seems to me a very dangerous procedure to follow both in regard to avoidance of violence and regarding our own future in the N.-W.F.P. To fight democratically and to be defeated does not weaken us for long and we can renew the struggle in other ways later. *But to give up without a struggle means a certain lack of integrity through fear of consequences and leads to the collapse of the organisation which was unable to face the issue.* (Italics mine).
>
> In view of all these circumstances, it seems to me that the only right course is for us to accept the referendum and to prepare for it with all our strength. We have a good chance of winning it. . . . We should go to the referendum on the cry that we want the largest measure of freedom and independence in the Frontier. . . . This is not a straight issue of sovereign independence but a slight variation of that theme which should prove helpful. . . . In effect, after Pakistan comes into being in Western Punjab, and the Frontier is cut off from India, the N.-W.F.P. will inevitably have, because of this cutting off and other reasons, a very great deal of autonomy and independence.

Pandit Nehru, therefore, saw no other course open to the Congress but to accept the referendum and fight it. "If there is risk in this course, there are far greater risks of bloodshed in other courses. The course suggested is a brave, frank course of accepting battle peacefully. To give up the battle, when final decisions are being taken, will result in deep psychological injury to our people."

What seems to have swayed the judgment of the Congress High Command, apart from the tip that the chances of Congress winning the referendum in the Frontier Province were 50:50, was the compulsion of the situation in which they found themselves placed and the vital role which Mountbatten played in that situation. To come back to Pandit Nehru's note: "To some extent he (Mountbatten) is naturally bound by the past and the present set-up; but he is trying his best to go ahead in the right direction. He realises the difficulties of the Frontier problem and wants to do everything in his power to solve them. I think he will prove helpful. He is convinced, however, that in the peculiar conditions that are arising in India now owing to possible secession of some parts, a chance must be given to the Frontier people to decide themselves by means of a referendum. *He is definitely committed himself to this and he cannot get out of it without grave injury to his own prestige and impartiality. He would probably prefer to resign than to face such a situation.*" (Italics mine).

They did not want to put him in that position, if they could help it, and lose his good offices.

Despite its brilliant ratiocination, Pandit Nehru's note, as even one who runs can see, was only three quarters wisdom. Essentially it was a rationalisation of surrender. Gandhiji felt unhappy. To Pandit Nehru he wrote :

> If I shared your premises, I should wholeheartedly agree with you. I am sending your note by a messenger to the Badshah. . . . The more I contemplate the difference in outlook and opinion between the members of the Working Committee and me, I feel that my presence (in Delhi) is unnecessary even if it is not detrimental to the cause we all have at heart. . . . May I not go back to Bihar in two or three days?[8]

Touching the root of the matter, he proceeded: "Would it be wrong if you insisted that referendum would be wrong without the presentation of the picture of Pakistan?"

To Mountbatten he wrote the next day:

> Whether he favours the idea or not, Quaid-i-Azam should be asked to give a fair picture of the Pakistan scheme before the simple Pathan mind is asked to make its choice of Hindustan or Pakistan. I fancy that the Pathan knows his position in Hindustan. If he does not, the Congress or the Constituent Assembly now at work should be called upon to complete the picture. It will be unfair, I apprehend, to choose between Hindustan or Pakistan without knowing what each is. He should at least know where his entity will be fully protected.

> There is as yet no peace in the Frontier Province. Can there be a true referendum when strife has not completely abated? Minds are too heated to think coherently. . . . *If peace does not reign in the land, the whole superstructure will come to pieces and you will, in spite of division, leave behind a legacy of which you will not be proud.*[9] (Italics mine).

4

Gandhiji despatched a copy of Pandit Nehru's note to Badshah Khan with the remark: "It is the result of a difference of opinion between him and me. In the circumstances, I must not guide you. . . . Now you have to act as you think best."[10]

In a letter that crossed this, Badshah Khan wrote to Gandhiji, from Peshawar, on the 8th June: "I have consulted all my important workers and we all are of the considered opinion that we cannot agree to the holding of the referendum on the issues contained in para 4 (of the 3rd June plan). Moreover the conditions prevailing in the Province at the moment are such that the holding of the referendum will lead to serious violence. We are also against Pakistan and would like to have a free Pathan State within India."

On receipt of Pandit Nehru's note, he again wrote to Gandhiji on the 11th June:

> This evening a joint meeting of the members of the Frontier Provincial Congress Committee, Congress Parliamentary Party and the Salars (Chiefs) of the Khudai Khidmatgars was held for about four hours. Representatives from all over the Province took part in the meeting. The consensus of opinion was that we should not take part in the referendum on the issue in para 4(a) of the announcement. They all desired that the issues should be amended on the basis of Pakistan and free Pathan State.

The Congress High Command naturally felt sorry for this decision. But finding no alternative, they agreed to Gandhiji's suggestion that since Jinnah had refused to woo the Pathans, Badshah Khan should, by the same token, approach and woo the League instead. Accordingly, on the 18th June, Badshah Khan met Jinnah at the latter's residence. Now that division of India was accepted by the Congress and the League, he told Jinnah, the Pathans were quite agreeable to joining Pakistan provided (1) it was on honourable terms, (2) in case Pakistan, after independence, decided to stay under British domination, the Pathans in the Settled Districts or in the Tribal areas should have the power to opt out of such a Dominion and form a separate independent State, and (3) all matters concerning tribal people should be settled by the Pathans themselves, without the interference or domination of

the non-Pathans, a right which had been conceded even by the existing Constituent Assembly.

Badshah Khan's attempt to come to an honourable compromise with the Muslim League again proved illfated. It could not be otherwise. The League knew that in any case it was going to get the Frontier Province. It could very well afford to carry the rap.

Gandhiji, who had sent Badshah Khan to meet Jinnah with his prayers in which he had asked the congregation to join him, felt greatly troubled over the result of the interview. He saw in a flash the destiny that awaited the Khan Brothers, and their non-violent Khudai Khidmatgars in the Frontier Province. The thought of it kept him awake till half past twelve that night. Getting up even before the usual 3 a. m. next morning, he began to ruminate: "I cannot cease thinking of Badshah Khan even when I have ceased to desire to live up to 125 years. Badshah Khan is a prodigy. I am seeing more and more of his deeply spiritual nature everyday. He has patience, faith and non-violence joined to true humility. Countless Pathans have enshrined him in their hearts as their "uncrowned king". For such a person there can be no defeat. I am sure, he will not shrink from any sacrifice or suffering but will die serving the Pathans with his last breath. He lives only for that. He is a man of penance, also of illumination, with love for all and hatred towards none." He then laid himself down and tried to doze off, but after a while, he again opened his eyes and said: "No, I can't sleep. The thought of him has robbed me of my sleep."

Referring to the failure of Badshah Khan-Jinnah talks, he remarked at the evening prayer meeting that they could, if they felt inclined, upbraid him that his and their prayers were not answered but they would be mistaken in judging God that way. Prayer presupposed faith. God's ways were different from the ways of mortals; they were inscrutable. No prayer went in vain, as no action went in vain. It bore fruit whether one saw it or not, and the result of heartfelt prayer was far more potent than that of action so-called.

The failure of the talks with Jinnah was followed, as usual, by a scurrilous attack on Badshah Khan in the Muslim League Press. Referring to a report that had appeared in the *Dawn*, Badshah Khan wrote on the 19th June to Jinnah:

> I have been pained to read the *Dawn's* report. There are some statements in it which are completely untrue, such as that the Congress has refused financial help to me and my "henchmen". No question of asking for or getting financial help has arisen and there has been no reference to it whatever.
>
> I paid a visit to you so that, if possible, we might find a way out, peaceful and honourable to all concerned. Unfortunately, we could not agree. But in any event the tone and manner, as

well as the contents, of the *Dawn* report are not such as to lead to a friendly approach or a settlement.

After meeting his colleagues, Badshah Khan wrote to Jinnah from Peshawar on the 24th June:

> I told you that although I had full powers to decide issues, I would like to put the whole matter before my colleagues at a meeting to be held at Bannu on the 21st June, 1947. The meeting unanimously passed the following resolution:
>
> "This meeting of the members of the Frontier Provincial Congress Committee, Congress Parliamentary Party, Khudai Khidmatgars and Zalmai Pakhtoons (the Young Pathan League) held at Bannu on the 21st June, 1947, under the chairmanship of Khan Amir Mohammad Khan, President, Frontier Provincial Congress Committee, unanimously resolves that a free Pathan State of all Pakhtoons be established. The constitution of the State will be framed on the basis of Islamic conception of democracy, equality and social justice. This meeting appeals to all the Pathans to unite for the attainment of this cherished goal and not to submit to any non-Pakhtoon domination."

The Frontier leaders, accordingly, decided not to take part in the referendum if it was to be fought on purely communal lines. They would participate only if it provided them scope to pronounce on the issue of a free Pathanistan.

* * *

Pointing to a low hill on the horizon near their village home of Utmanzai, Badshah Khan's son, Abdul Ghani, once exclaimed during Gandhiji's visit to the Frontier Province in 1939: "That is the hill upon which so and so hanged my great-grand uncle (or was it a grand-uncle?) as a result of a blood-feud." It was one of them who had stopped the custom of "blood-feuds" in their clan. A reversion to internecine feuds, which it had taken the Khan Brothers a lifetime of labour to eradicate, would have been a tragedy too deep for tears. The Khan Brothers, like the rightful mother in the story of Solomon's judgment, chose to make over the child to their rival instead of dividing it. This aspect of the "Operation Solomon" seems not to have been sufficiently appreciated either by the Muslim League or the British power or even the Congress High Command.

In his social relations the Pathan is ruled by what is known as Pukhtoonwali or the threefold Pathan code of honour. It imposes upon tribesmen obligations, the non-observance of any of which is regarded as the deadliest of sins and is followed by lasting dishonour and ostracism. They are: (1) He must grant to all fugitives the right of asylum (*nanawatai*), (2) he must proffer open-handed hospitality (*melmastia*) even

to his deadliest enemy, and (3) he must wipe out insult with insult (*badal*).

This last leads to the practice of blood-feuds which is the bane of the Pathan race. "Every branch or section of a tribe," observes Collin Davis, "has its internecine wars, every family its hereditary blood-feuds and every individual his personal foes. Every person counts up his murders, each tribe has its debtor and creditor account with its neighbours, life for life." Davis goes on to add: "Unfortunately unruly tribesmen fail to realise that under the disastrous influence of this barbarous custom, many of their noblest families are brought to the verge of extinction. Until these civil warfares die out, there can be no united people and no reign of peace."[11]

To Badshah Khan this was no academic issue. "Mahatmaji," he once remarked to Gandhiji during the aforementioned 1939 visit, "my conviction is daily growing deeper that more than anything else, violence has been the bane of us Pathans in this Province. It shattered our solidarity and tore us with wretched internal feuds. The entire strength of the Pathan is today spent in thinking how to cut the throat of his brother." And again:

> Whatever may be the case with other Provinces, I am firmly convinced that so far as the Frontier Province is concerned, the non-violence movement is the greatest boon that God has sent to us. There is no other way of salvation for the Pathans except through non-violence. I say this from our experience of the miraculous transformation that even the little measure of non-violence that we have attained has wrought in our midst. Mahatmaji, we used to be so timid and indolent. The sight of an Englishman would frighten us. We thought nothing of wasting our time in idleness. Your movement has instilled fresh life into us. . . . We have shed our fear and are no longer afraid of an Englishman or, for that matter, of any man. . . . *A non-violent Pathan, they say, is more dangerous than a violent Pathan.* . . . We were on the brink of utter ruination. But God in His mercy sent us the non-violence movement to save us in our extremity.

No-one knew half so well as Gandhiji how Badshah Khan had laboured to wean the Pathans from their violent way of life and to convert them into soldiers of non-violence. No wonder that he chose to side with him rather than his colleagues of the Congress High Command.

5

It now only remained for the Congress President to report to the Viceroy the final decision of the Khan Brothers which he did in the following note:

> Whenever the question of the Frontier arose, we told you that it would be necessary to consult the Frontier Ministers and leaders before a final answer could be given on our behalf. The matter concerned them intimately and they were the best judges of the situation. They were very much averse to any issue being raised in the Province which could be exploited as purely communal or Hindu-Muslim issue. . . . The best way to avoid this was to put forward the real issue. This was the creation of a free Pathan State which would later decide on its relations with the Indian Union or Pakistan.
>
> In accordance with this strong sentiment, I wrote to you in my letter dated June 2nd . . . that "the proposed referendum should provide for the people voting for independence and subsequent decision as to their relation with the rest of India." I understand that you have been unable to agree to this unless the Muslim League also agreed. This has added to our difficulties and we have been giving anxious thought to the matter.
>
> We have accepted the Plan. . . . At the same time we cannot impose any course of action on the N.-W.F.P. to which the leaders and people there are opposed . . . . We have again conferred with Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. . . . He tells us that there is a strong and insistent demand that the Frontier people should be allowed to pronounce on the issue of independence. They are totally averse to taking part in a referendum which must turn purely on the communal issue . . . . Badshah Khan contends that if the issue cannot be between Pathanistan and Pakistan, he would advise his followers to abstain from participating in the referendum. This, he holds, will ease the situation somewhat though the Province may be lost to the Congress, at least for the time being.[12]

On the 29th June Gandhiji also wrote to Lord Mountbatten in similar terms: "Badshah Khan writes to me to say that he had failed in his move for a free Pathanistan, therefore, the referendum would go on without any interference by his followers, the latter abstaining from voting either way. He fully realises that in this case the Frontier would probably go to Pakistan."

Gandhiji's letter also contained the following:

> He wants me also to draw your attention to the fact that Punjabi Muslims . . . are being freely introduced in the Frontier Province to affect the referendum. . . . This increases the risk of bloodshed and worse. He also says that non-Muslim refugees numbering many thousand will have no chance . . . of taking part in the referendum and they are threatened with dire penalty should they dare to exercise the vote.

> I see in today's papers that Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah contends that if the Pathans abstain from voting, the abstention will constitute breach of the terms of referendum. I do not see the force of the contention.

"I am glad to hear," replied Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji, "that the referendum will be allowed to proceed without any interference by the followers of Badshah Khan. I am sending a copy of your letter to the Governor so that he may take any action that may be necessary as a result of the points you make about Punjabi Muslims . . . and non-Muslim refugees having no chance to vote."[13]

What importance the Governor of the Frontier attached to Lord Mountbatten's message can only be inferred from Badshah Khan's letter of the 12th July to Gandhiji reproduced elsewhere in this chapter (see page 280). In his next letter we find the Viceroy instead complaining that Red Shirts (Khudai Khidmatgars) were "persuading" people not to vote: "I think you will agree that any action of this sort is likely to lead to the very violence you and I are anxious to avoid. I trust that if the reports are true . . . you will be able to persuade Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan . . . to implement that policy."[14]

To this Gandhiji replied:

> Agitation is undoubtedly being carried on today by Badshah Khan . . . to tell the voters that it is wrong for them to take part in the voting. There should be no demonstration during the voting days and there should be no approach to the voters during the voting time. If this is what you mean I shall be glad to refer to the matter in those terms at the evening prayer. I am quite prepared to adopt quicker means of reaching Badshah Khan, if you suggest any. If you have any other thing in view, you will please let me know.

Mountbatten wanted more.

Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji 5th July, 1947

> If you could go a little further and deprecate any agitation before the polling days which might lead directly or indirectly to disturbances, I should naturally be grateful.
>
> It is important, I think, that Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan should have your advice as soon as possible, and if you would care to send him a letter, I could arrange to get it delivered to Peshawar by hand of pilot, and ask the Governor to send it on.
>
> I am most grateful for your help.

About noon, fortunately, a Pathan known to be a Khudai Khidmatgar called upon Gandhiji. He was going to Peshawar and so Gandhiji

gave him an oral message for Badshah Khan. He also sent a letter to the Viceroy for Badshah Khan:

Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten 5th July, 1947

You may read the letter and if you think that it covers the new point you have raised, you may send the letter by special messenger as suggested by you. I am hoping that there will be no disturbance on the part of Badshah Khan and his followers. In the message that I sent through the Pathan Khudai Khidmatgar, I covered much more ground than mentioned in my letter to Badshah Khan. It is open to you not to send the enclosed if it does not merit your approval.

The following is the letter Gandhiji sent to Badshah Khan through the Viceroy:

Gandhiji to Badshah Khan 5th July, 1947

Khudai Khidmatgar Alam Khan saw me before 12 o'clock and he said that he was leaving for Peshawar tonight. I did not send you any letter through him. But I told him that there should be no demonstration against League Muslims, that it should be enough that in the present state of tension and misrepresentation Khudai Khidmatgars should not vote at all one way or the other, that they were entitled so far as internal affairs were concerned to claim and to have complete autonomy without any interference from Pakistan or the Union and that they could come to a decision as to the choice between the Union or Pakistan when the constitutions of the two were promulgated and when the Frontier Province had fashioned its own autonomous constitution. Above all every occasion for clash with the Muslim League members was to be avoided. Real Pathan bravery was now on its trial. It was to be cheerfully meeting blows or even meeting death at the hands of the opponents without the slightest sort of retaliation. Boycott would certainly result in a legal victory for Pakistanis but it would be a moral defeat, if without the slightest fear of violence from your side, the bulk of the Pathans refrained in a dignified manner from participating in the referendum. There should be no fuss, no procession, no disobedience of any orders from authority. . . . This letter is also in answer to a complaint received by the Viceroy that it was reported that there was fear of disturbances to be caused by the Khudai Khidmatgars.

He followed it up by another letter two days later: "Dear Badshah: No news from you. I hope you had my long letter and that you have acted up to it. Your and my honour is involved in strict adherence

to non-violence on our part in thought, word and deed. No news up to now (9.30) in the papers. Love, Bapu."

The reply which Badshah Khan's letter, dated 12th July, brought was disturbing: "I and my workers have been going about from village to village asking the people to remain absolutely non-violent even under provocation on the part of the Muslim Leaguers. The Muslim Leaguers are daily taking out processions raising highly objectionable slogans. They call us Kafirs and resort to abusive language. . . . I have been personally hooted. I feel there is an organised conspiracy between the Muslim Leaguers, the officials and the officers in charge of the referendum. . . . Presiding officers have actively encouraged the passing of hundreds of bogus votes. . . . In some places 80 to 90 per cent. votes have been polled, a thing unheard of in any election and more so on the basis of an electoral roll which was prepared about two years ago.

"We have been working under very difficult and trying circumstances, but have adhered to non-violence in thought, word and deed. How long a state of affairs like this can last, it is not easy for me to say. . . . In a nut-shell, the Muslim Leaguers backed by officials are out to create disturbances. We have done everything humanly possible to avoid a clash.

"Another matter which is causing serious concern to us is the presence in our Province of a large number of Punjabis who . . . openly incite people to violence. Not only that but they have also gone to the length of suggesting in public meetings that the top leaders of the Red Shirts should be done away with. They also say openly that after Pakistan has been established there will be a trial on the lines of the Nuremberg trial and all of them who are called as traitors to Islam will be hanged. . . . Mr. Jalal-ud-din, M. L. A. (Hazara) stated in a public meeting that if any of the Muslim Ministers visited Hazara, he would be killed."

A leading daily of Delhi published this despatch dated 3rd July, 1947: " 'I warn the Ministry that if any Minister tries to visit Hazara district for Congress propaganda, he will be killed,' declared Khan Jalal-ud-din. . . . He further added that before returning to Hazara the Hindus and Sikhs should clearly declare their full support to Pakistan and send a copy of such declaration to the League office if they want to live peacefully in the district."[15]

About this time, the Afghan Government publicly renewed its old-standing demand for a revision of the Durand line which constituted the boundary between India and Afghanistan. Discarding all scruples the Muslim League connected it with the Pathan demand for autonomy and used it to make propaganda against the Khan Brothers. Badshah Khan was charged with playing the game of Afghanistan. All sorts of insinuations were recklessly flung at the Khan

brothers. One of them referred to a mysterious visit of two Indian emissaries to Kabul. Referring to these, Dr. Khan Saheb wrote in one of his letters to Pandit Nehru: "We assure you that we have never thought of joining Afghanistan. . . . We have also learnt for the first time that the Afghan Government have officially approached the Government of India. We having been placed in an unenviable position, naturally, the Afghan Government are taking advantage of it and exploiting the situation. We know nothing of a Congress emissary approaching the Afghan Government."[16]

Even Gandhiji was forced to break his self-imposed silence in the face of this calumnious campaign against one whom he knew to be the soul of truth and honour. "Badshah Khan and his co-workers do not relish being asked to choose between Hindustan and Pakistan, bearing the unjust meaning Hindus or Muslims," he observed in a written message to his post-prayer meeting on the 30th July, his weekly day of silence and self-introspection. "The Khudai Khidmatgars will, therefore, not exercise their votes. . . . The charge that Pathanistan is a new cry is being flung in Badshah Khan's face. Even before the Congress Ministry came into being, so far as I know, Badshah Khan had in his mind Pathan independence in internal affairs. He does not want to create a new, additional State. If he can frame his local constitution, he will gladly make his choice of joining one State or the other. It is difficult for me to understand the objection to this yearning after Pathan autonomy unless the object is to humiliate the Pathans and to tame them into subjection. The more serious charge is that Badshah Khan is playing into the hands of Afghanistan. I consider him to be incapable of any underhand dealing. He would not allow the Frontier Province to be absorbed by Afghanistan."

Gandhiji went on to add: "As his friend, and because I am his friend, I must admit one failing of his. He is highly suspicious especially of British professions and intentions. I would urge on all to overlook this failing which is by no means peculiar to him. Only it does not sit well on a leader of his eminence. I contend that though I have called it a failing, which it is in one way, in another it is to be regarded as a virtue in that he cannot, even if he tries, conceal his thoughts. He is too honest to hide them."

6

It was in this climate that the referendum was held. Having taken their stand on the slippery slope, the Congress High Command had to take all that followed. The process continues to this day. The only concession they gained was that Sir Olaf Caroe was sent out on a two months' leave and Lt.-General Sir Rob Lockhart was appointed in

his place as the Governor for the duration. Even this required a Viceroy of Lord Mountbatten's calibre to secure it. A half of one dozen and six of the other was all the difference it made in the peculiar circumstances prevailing in the Frontier Province at that time.

While in Baluchistan a quasi-representative body was created to function in the place of a referendum, in the Frontier where a body of popular representatives already existed, to circumvent its verdict recourse was had to a referendum on a spurious issue. The Khudai Khidmatgar party and its supporters took no part in the referendum and the Frontier Province was declared to be a part of Pakistan. It is no disparagement of Lord Mountbatten's good intentions to say that between his anxiety to make his partition plan acceptable to the League and the intrigues of the higher British officials on the one hand and the desperate straits to which the Congress High Command were reduced as a result of engaging in a game of diplomacy with the British, the N.-W.F.P. fell a casualty and justice was sacrificed at the altar of expediency.

On the 30th July, Gandhiji left Delhi for Kashmir, and Badshah Khan returned to his Province. Gandhiji told him his duty lay there "to make Pakistan really *pak* (pure)." As Badshah Khan took leave, he remarked to the members of Gandhiji's entourage: "Mahatmaji has shown us the true path. Long after we are no more, the coming generation of Hindus will remember him as an *avatar* like the Lord Krishna, Muslims as God's messenger, and Christians as another Prince of Peace. . . . That will be a proud day for India. May God spare him for long to give us inspiration and strength to fight for truth and justice to the last." And again: "Pray for us that He may give us courage and faith — we are going to be faced with terrible times."

They never met again. On the 15th August, 1947, India became independent after 150 years of subjection but for the Khan Brothers the battle had just begun. Hitherto they had waged a struggle against the British, who were foreigners. Now their own brethren were in power. Surely they could expect a fair deal from them. They had not fought all those years merely to exchange one yoke for another.

Dr. Khan Saheb's Ministry continued to be in power even after the partition. It was too firmly established to be dislodged by normal constitutional means. On 21st August, 1947, it was dismissed by Jinnah, the Governor-General of Pakistan, by a ukase.

In the first week of September, 1947, the Provincial *Jirgas*, the Parliamentary Party of the Frontier Province, Zalmai Pukhtoon, (the Pathan Youth League), Khudai Khidmatgars and representatives from tribal areas met in a large gathering at Sardaryab. In that meeting Badshah Khan once more defined his demand for Pathanistan. It meant no more, no less, than full freedom for the Pathans to manage their

internal affairs as a unit within the Pakistan State. One of the resolutions adopted in the meeting ran: "This new State will comprise the present six settled districts of the N.-W.F.P. and all such other contiguous areas inhabited by the Pathans which may wish to join the new State of their own free will. This State will enter into agreement on Defence, External Affairs and Communications with the Dominion of Pakistan."

Badshah Khan declared: "I have been working for the establishment of Pathanistan all my life. It was for the purpose of achieving unity among the Pathans that the Khudai Khidmatgars organisation was started in 1930. I stand for those principles today for which I stood in 1930. My path is therefore quite clear. I will not forsake it even if I stand alone in the world."

After partition the Khan Brothers seldom wrote to Gandhiji or to their Indian colleagues, so particular were they, as citizens of the Pakistan State, to keep their *bona fides* above suspicion. The campaign of villification and persecution nevertheless continued. Disquieting reports reached Gandhiji in the month of November. These made him feel concerned about the Khan Brothers' safety. In a letter to Badshah Khan he suggested to him openly to leave the Frontier Province and develop the non-violent technique from India. "This you can do here with me or otherwise. What that otherwise can be, I do not know." The only other alternative was to remain where he was and let the Pakistan authorities do their worst. "I do not believe," concluded Gandhiji, "as some do that non-violence can only be offered in a civilised or partially civilised society. Non-violence admits of no such limit."[17]

Badshah Khan was not the one to run away from any ordeal. In reply he sent word to Gandhiji not to worry but just send him and his associates his blessings and prayers. A man of faith, he was of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made. He remained there with his brother Dr. Khan Saheb to bear witness to his faith in the teaching of the Master and the Master's faith in him, in a Pakistan prison.[18]

"Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind."

Part Three

LEFT ALONE

CHAPTER XIII

'IT IS DARKEST BEFORE DAWN'

1

THE DEVELOPMENTS in the Frontier Province had left Gandhiji extremely unhappy. The way partition was being effected, like the way the decision about partition itself had come, did not spell peace. "Lord Mountbatten means well, but I am afraid, the way he is going he may end by unwittingly doing incalculable harm," he observed in one of his prayer addresses.[1] In the desperation to obtain immediate relief, there was an unwillingness to grapple with realities and recourse was being had to make-believe and false compromises. Gandhiji's prediction concerning the departing British power was coming true. It was showing deep fissures. In the past that power had not hesitated to take strong measures when its own interests were at stake; but now it was not prepared to face up to the full logic of its solemn declaration and put down violence by a firm hand.

Gandhiji saw no good coming out of this. By accepting partition at British hands, the Congress had averted an open civil-war but only at the cost of a smouldering undeclared war. Gandhiji would have preferred the naked reality. An open fight, however ugly, ends in the natural course in a spell of peace and confers immunity of a sort, at least for a time. But an undeclared war, which only the armed might of a third party prevents from breaking out into an open fight, only intensifies the dangerous passions. And as mental violence tends always to run to an excess that physical violence seldom does, such violence, when it ultimately breaks loose, does so with the cataclysmic fury of a lightning stroke, which leaves nothing but the trail of death and destruction behind.

That was why Gandhiji had been so opposed to partition under the British aegis. He saw in the consequences of partition, as they were unfolding themselves, a confirmation of his worst fears. The Congress High Command had agreed to the vivisection of India to obtain a respite for themselves and the country from the League's subversive activities. In Pandit Nehru's grim phrase, they had cut off their head to get rid of their headache. They got relief no more than an amputee, who is left with his "phantom limb" aching worse than ever even after the affected member has been removed

Hitherto Lord Mountbatten had managed one way or the other

to prevent the issue of the continuation of the League members in the Interim Government from coming to a head. This became difficult after the acceptance of the partition plan by the parties, particularly when the Congress again pressed its demand in that regard. But Jinnah threatened to withdraw the League's acceptance of the 3rd June plan if Muslim League nominees were removed from the Interim Government, and Mountbatten fought shy of taking any step which might jeopardise the chance of the Indian Independence Bill being passed by Parliament. The question of the Governor-Generalship, too, was pending. Both the Congress and the Muslim League were understood to have provisionally agreed to Lord Mountbatten being the Governor-General for both the parts of India, to begin with. But Jinnah adroitly kept postponing giving his formal decision till the last moment in the hope, perhaps, of using it as a trump card to extract still further political concessions from the Viceroy and the Viceroy's advisers felt that the Viceroy must not, in the circumstances, take any action that would jeopardise his "objective and almost judicial status". As a way out, Mountbatten suggested that all controversial matters in the Interim Government should, so far as possible, be put into cold storage for the time being while contentious issues arising in the course of day-to-day administration should be referred to him for decision instead of being settled by a majority vote in the Cabinet. This provided him with a temporary relief but the tension remained. Conditions in the Punjab, Bengal and the Frontier Province grew from bad to worse; the Sikhs became restive; the number of refugees from the north-west Punjab increased; the minorities in Sind and the Frontier Province felt more and more insecure as to their future in Pakistan; round about the capital itself pitched battles were being fought between the Muslim Meos of Gurgaon district on the one side and the Hindu Ahirs and Jats on the other, and Sardar Patel, to his chagrin, found that with the Muslim League's bastion firmly established in the Interim Government and in the administration he could do nothing to cope with the deteriorating situation. The outlook was grave.

On the day after the Council of the All-India Muslim League adopted its resolution accepting the partition plan, Gandhiji once again wrote to Lord Mountbatten to bring home to him the danger of allowing matters to drift:

> The sooner you have a homogeneous Ministry the better. In no case can the League nominees work independently of the whole Cabinet. It is a vicious thing that there is no joint responsibility for every act of individual members. . . .
>
> The problem of the civil and military services . . . demands the same firm handling. . . . Gurgaon strife is an instance in



Hindustan Times

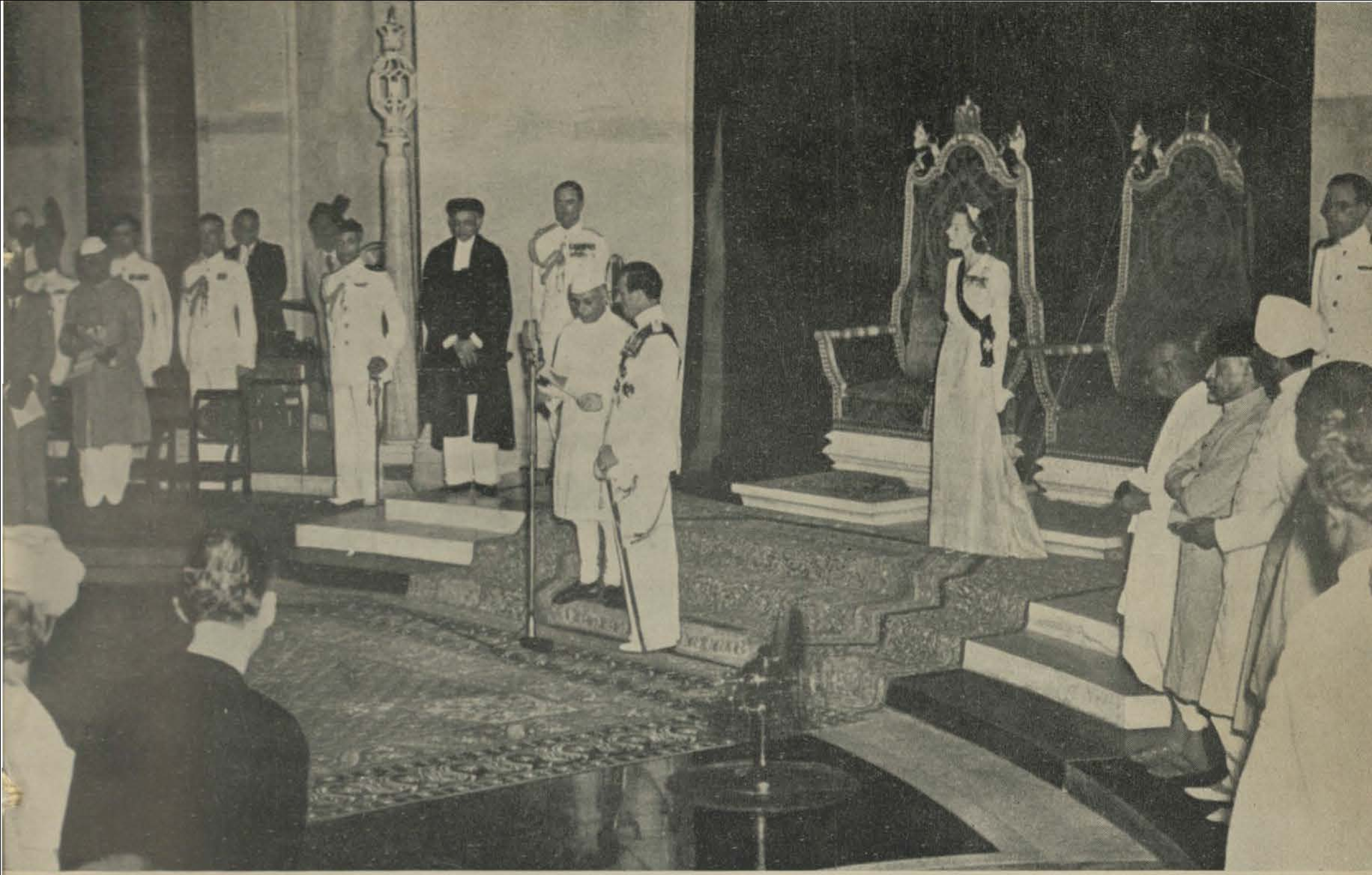
The physician physicked. Gandhiji with his grand-child Gopu. "The two had a very animated pantomime talk." (page 241) [ONE



G. S. Bora *Hindustan Tim*



(Above) Gandhiji
Sardar Patel
Pyarelal. On
extreme right S
Bose. "The problem
the States is diffi
But I know you
successfully tackle
(page 332). (L
Gandhiji with Mah
Tyagi. "Who listen
me today?" (page

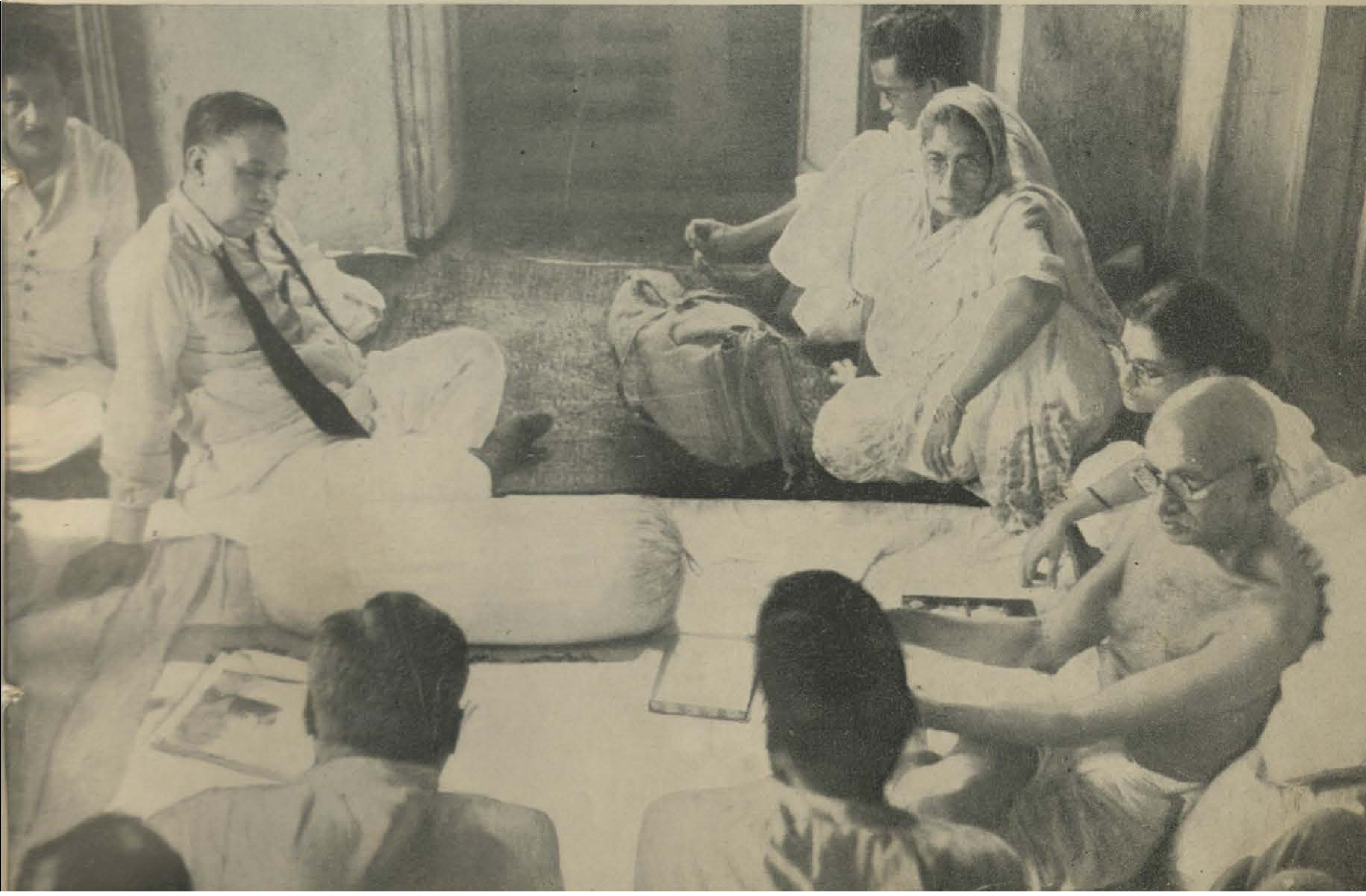


Publications Division: Govt. of India

Independence Day. (Above) Swearing-in ceremony at Delhi. (Below) "One-Man Boundary Force" in riot-torn Calcutta. "Theirs be the music, the colour, the glory, the gold/Mine be...the maimed... the halt and the blind in the rain and the cold." (page 360)

[THREE

The Statesman





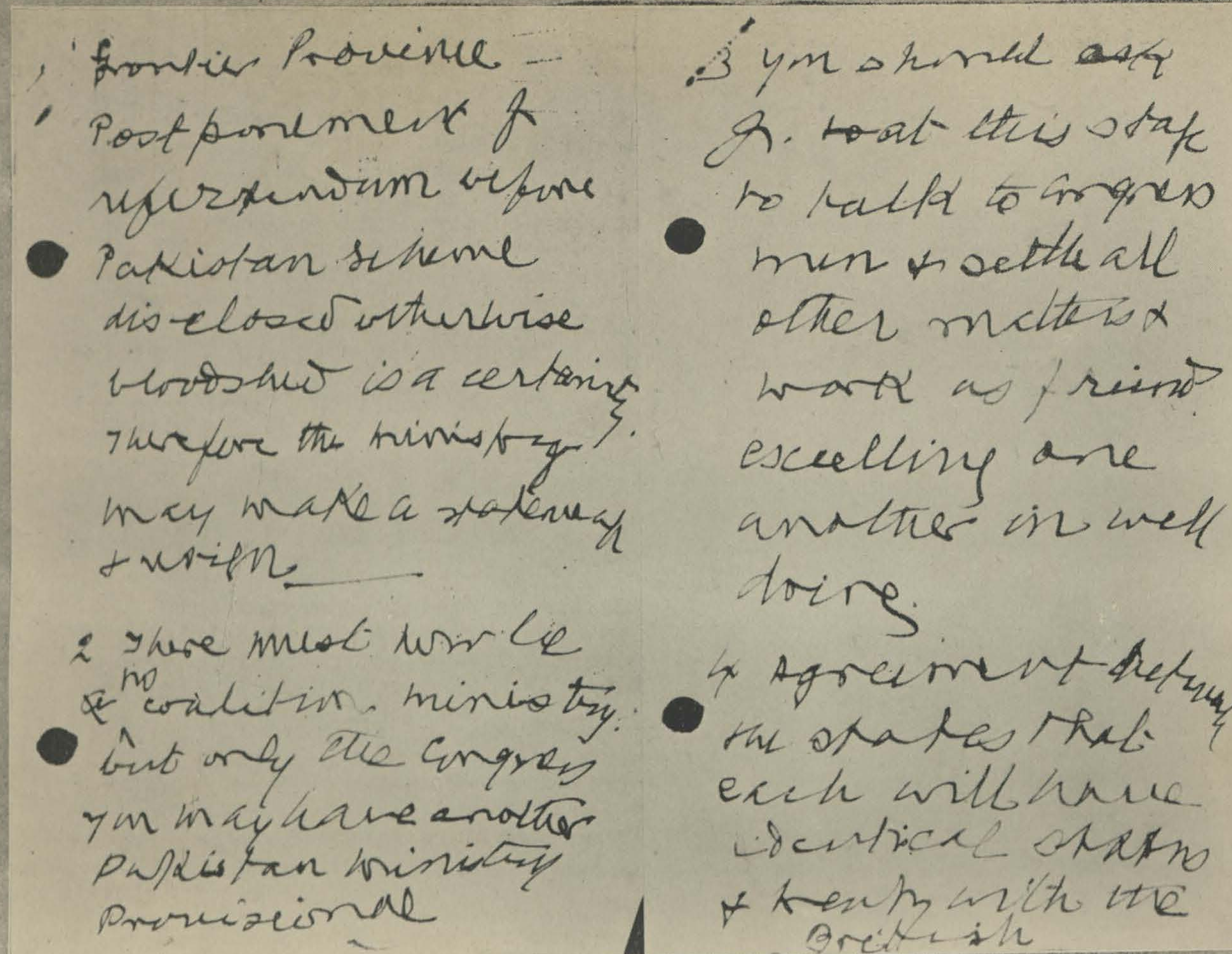
" The biggest migration of population in recor



story was in progress." (page 432)

Publications Division: Govt. of India

[FIVE

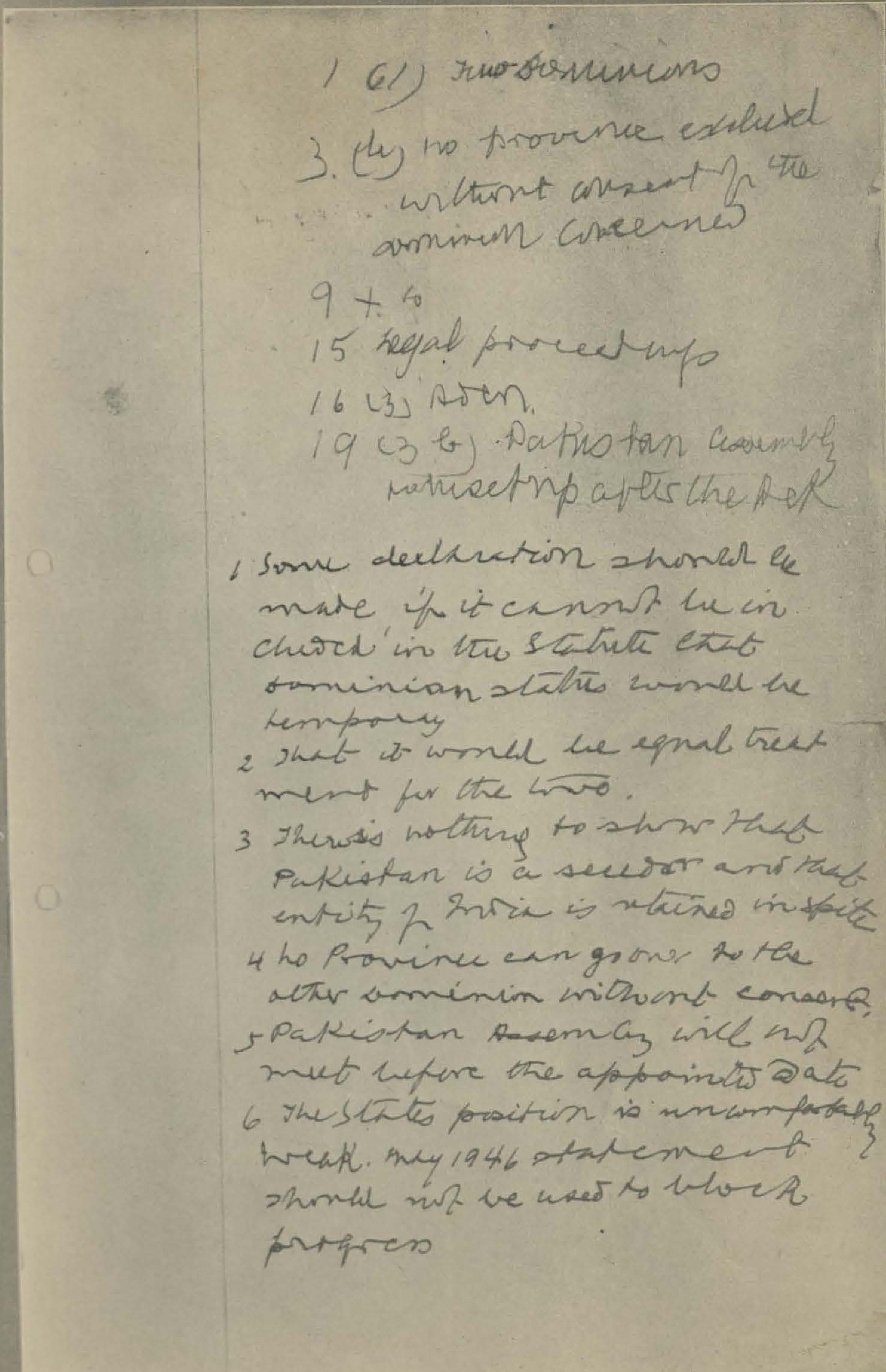

Frontier Province –
Postponement of
referendum before
Pakistan scheme
disclosed otherwise
bloodshed is a certainty.
Therefore the ministry
may make a statement
& resign.

2 There must be
no coalition ministry.
but only the Congress
you may have another
Pakistan ministry
provisional

3 you should ask
J. not at this stage
to talk to Congress
men & settle all
other matters &
work as friends
excelling one
another in well
doing.

4 Agreement between
the states that
each will have
identical status
& treaty with the
British

SIX] Gandhiji's jottings for a meeting with Mountbatten. "The Frontier Ministry should resign. . .on the sole ground that a referendum at this moment must lead to bloodshed." (page 268)



1 (b) two dominions

3. (b) no province excluded without consent of the dominion concerned

9 & 10

15 legal proceedings

16 (3) Adm.

19 (3 b) Pakistan assembly not meeting after the Act

1 Some declaration should be made if it cannot be included in the Statute that dominion status would be temporary

2 That it would be equal treatment for the two.

3 There is nothing to show that Pakistan is a seceder and that entity of India is retained in spite

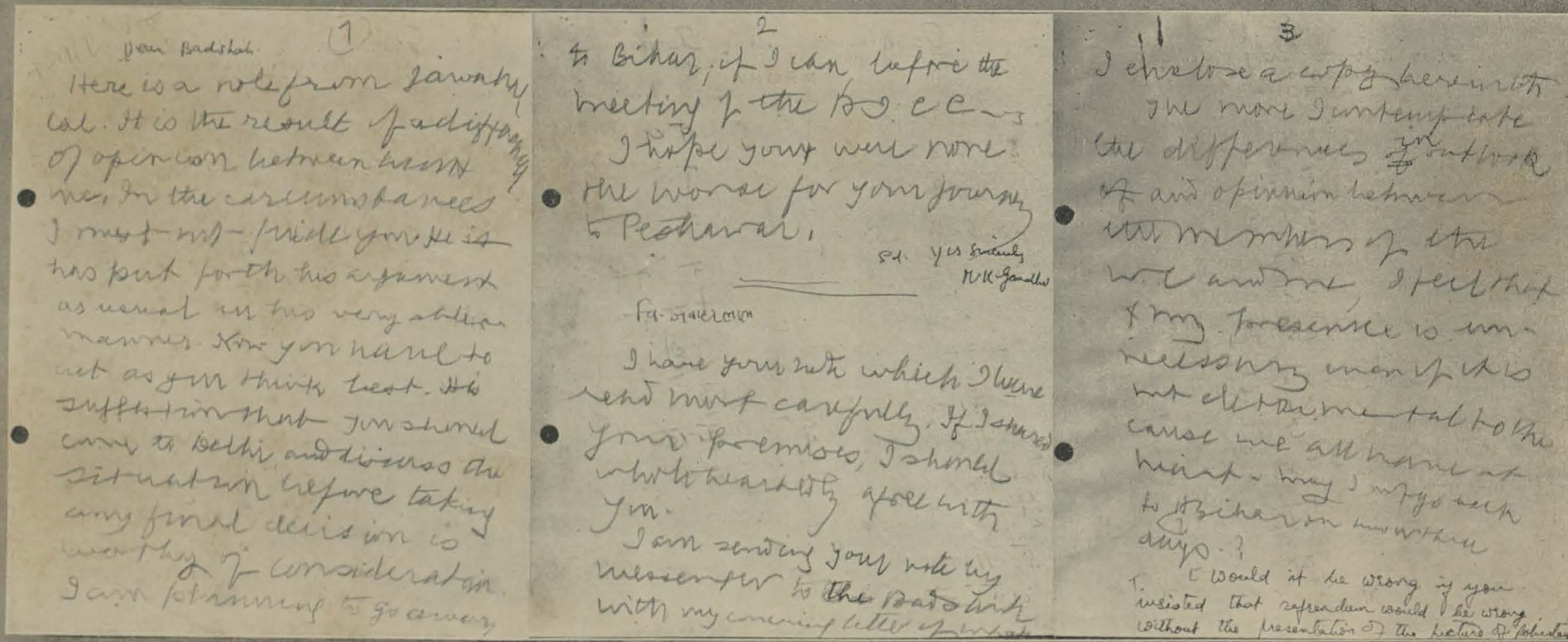
4 No Province can go over to the other dominion without consent.

5 Pakistan Assembly will not meet before the appointed date

6 The States position is uncomfortably weak. May 1946 statement should not be used to block progress

Gandhiji's reaction to draft Independence Bill. "There is nothing to show that Pakistan is a seceder and that entity of India is retained in spite." (page 298)

[SEVEN



Dear Badshah,

Here is a note from Jawaharlal. It is the result of a difference of opinion between him and me. In the circumstances I must not guide you. He has put forth his argument as usual in his very able manner. Now you have to act as you think best. His suggestion that you should come to Delhi and discuss the situation before taking any final decision is worthy of consideration. I am planning to go away to Bihar, if I can before the meeting of the A.I.C.C.

I hope you are none the worse for your journey to Peshawar.

Yours sincerely
M. K. Gandhi

Pt. Jawaharlal

I have your note which I have read most carefully. If I share your premises, I should wholeheartedly agree with you.

I am sending your note by messenger to the Badshah with my covering letter of which I enclose a copy herewith.

The more I contemplate the differences in outlook and opinion between the members of the W.C. and me, I feel that my presence is unnecessary even if it is not detrimental to the cause we all have at heart. May I not go back to Bihar on [illegible] days?

Would it be wrong if you insisted that referendum would be wrong without the presentation of the pictures of [illegible]

EIGHT] Draft of Gandhiji's letters to Badshah Khan and Pandit Nehru. " It is the result of a difference of opinion between him and me. In the circumstances I must not guide you." (page 273) " The more I contemplate the difference... between members of Working Committee and me, I feel my presence (in Delhi) is unnecessary." (page 272)

point. So far as I know, one single officer is responsible for the continuance of the mischief.

Lastly, may I suggest that the attempt to please all parties is a fruitless and thankless task. In the course of our conversation, I suggested that equal praise bestowed on both the parties was not meant. No praise would have been the right thing. "Duty will be merit when debt becomes a donation." It is not too late to mend. Your undoubted skill as a warrior was never more in demand than today. Fancy a sailor without his fleet, save his mother wit![12]

But Lord Mountbatten had his own difficulties. This did not fit in with his plans. And so the crisis continued.

Gandhiji was seized by the fear that Mountbatten's good intentions might all be turned to ashes unless there was a radical change in the policy pursued since the Cabinet Mission's visit to India. He decided once more to strive with him. A meeting that he had with him on the 26th June in that behalf, resulted in an incident:

Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten 27/28th June, 1947

I sent you a note in the afternoon. The time after the evening prayer and walk I wish to devote to talking to you on certain matters I was able to touch but could not develop when we met.

I told the Parliamentary delegation that heralded the Cabinet Mission and the Cabinet Mission itself that they had to choose between the two parties or even three. They were doomed to fail, if they tried to please all, holding them all to be in the right. I had hoped that you were bravely and honestly trying to extricate yourself from the impossible position. But my eyes were opened when, if I understood you correctly, you said that Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah and the League members were equally in the right with the Congress members and that possibly Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah was more so. I suggested that this is not humanly possible. One must be wholly right in the comparative sense. You have to make your choice at this very critical stage in the history of this country. If you think that Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah is on the whole more correct and more reasonable than the Congress, you should choose the League as your advisers and in all matters be frankly and openly guided by them.

You threw out a hint that Quaid-i-Azam might not be able even to let you quit even by 15th August especially if the Congress members did not adopt a helpful attitude. This was for me a startling statement. I pointed the initial mistake of the British being party to splitting India into two. It is not possible to undo the mistake. But I hold that it is quite possible and necessary not

to put a premium upon the mistake. This does not in any way impinge upon the very admirable doctrine of fair-play. Fair-play demands that I do not help the mistaken party to fancy that the mistake was no mistake but a belated and only partial discharge of an obligation.

You startled me again by telling me that, if the partition had not been made during British occupation, the Hindus being the major party would have never allowed partition and held the Muslims by force under subjection. I told you that this was a grave mistake. The question of numbers was wholly untenable in this connection. I cited the classic example of less than one hundred thousand British soldiers holding India under utter subjection. You saw no analogy between the two instances. I suggested the difference was only one of degree.

I place the following for your consideration:

(a) The Congress has solemnly declared that it would not hold by force any Province within the Union.

(b) It is physically impossible for millions of caste ridden Hindus to hold well-knit though fewer millions of Muslims under subjection by force.

(c) It must not be forgotten that Muslim dynasties have progressively subjected India by exactly the same means as the English conquerors later did.

(d) Already there has been a movement to win over to the Muslim side the so-called scheduled classes and the so-called aboriginal races.

(e) The caste Hindus who are the bugbear are, it can be shown conclusively, a hopeless minority. Of these the armed Rajputs are not yet nationalists as a class. The Brahmins and the Banias are still untrained in the use of arms. Their supremacy, where it exists, is purely moral. The Shudras count, I am sorry, more as scheduled class than anything else. That such Hindu society by reason of its mere superiority in numbers can crush millions of Muslims is an astounding myth.

This should show you why, even if I am alone, I swear by non-violence and truth together standing for the highest order of courage before which the atom bomb pales into insignificance, not to say of a fleet of dreadnaughts.

I have not shown this to any of my friends.

Mountbatten replied on the same day: "I am glad you wrote because after reading your letter, I feel that *almost from first to last I must have failed to make clear to you my meaning*. I am glad that you have not shown your letter to others, since I should be very sorry that views should be attributed to me which I did not, in fact, express.

I hope you will agree to discuss these matters again at our next meeting." (Italics mine).

There is no record of what occurred at this meeting or whether these questions were taken up later. It is therefore, impossible to tell as to how such a colossal misunderstanding arose between the two and how it was ultimately got over. Be that as it may. The outcome was that their mutual regard and trust in each other's sincerity remained unimpaired. Apart from giving a very clear picture of the working of Gandhiji's mind in his final effort to avert the catastrophe towards which the country was drifting, the correspondence provides an excellent illustration of Gandhiji's thoroughgoing readiness in the practice of his non-violence to give as much credit to the other side for good faith as he claimed for himself so that instead of leaving behind a legacy of recrimination and strained relationships, even the gravest of misunderstandings strengthened and deepened the foundations of mutual goodwill and understanding and won fresh friends for the cause.

During the last week of June and the beginning of July, Congress members in the Interim Government were on the brink of resigning from the Interim Government over the vexed question of the continuance of the League members in the Government. It had to be settled once and for all. A decision could no longer be postponed. At the last moment Quaid-i-Azam simplified matters by nominating himself as the Governor-General of Pakistan. Mountbatten now felt free to act. But Jinnah raised the objection that to ask the Muslim League members in the Interim Government to hand in their portfolios on any account would be tantamount to an insult to the League. And when Mountbatten finally evolved a formula that in his view met all objections, he threatened to denounce the Viceroy's plan for the reconstitution of the Interim Government as "illegal" under the 1935 Government of India Act. Legal opinion obtained from London seemed to uphold Jinnah's objection. It gave Lord Mountbatten some respite but left the Congress High Command with their headache worse than ever. And so it continued till the third week of July.

On the 19th July, 1947, after the Independence Bill was passed by the British Parliament, and Royal Assent was given to it, the Viceroy reconstituted the Interim Government dividing it for all practical purposes into two provisional administrations—one for the Indian Union and the other for Pakistan—the two parts consulting each other only on matters of "common concern", but acting independently of each other in all other respects. So far as the law and order situation in the Punjab, the Frontier Province and Sind was concerned, this made hardly any improvement, and so the pent up volcano continued to growl and rumble till independence, when it blew off its top and the molten lava boiled over involving millions in its fiery embrace.

2

The thorny question of India's future relationship with Great Britain remained unsolved. Though no party to it, Gandhiji had defended the Congress decision to accept Dominion Status for the Indian Union till such times as the Constituent Assembly settled the issue. But he held very strong views on the terms on which India could retain the British connection. He did not want to let the memory of past wrongs affect India's future relationship with Great Britain. He maintained, on the contrary, that since no country could live in isolation in our present-day shrinking world, if India had to make her choice of association with some country, she should naturally prefer continuing the old association with Britain to going in for a fresh one with some other country. Not severance but transformation and purification of the British connection had been his goal. Behind his non-cooperation there had always been the keenest desire to cooperate.

Illustrative of Gandhiji's attitude was an incident that occurred years ago. The issue of Dominion Status versus complete independence was the heated issue at the special Calcutta session of the Congress in 1928. Pandit Nehru was having an argument with Gandhiji over the latter's formula in favour of giving Great Britain yet another chance to do the right by India. If, however, their demand for Dominion Status was not conceded within the stipulated period of one year they would declare complete independence as their goal. Pandit Nehru flared up: "Bapu, that would be like a woman wanting to marry the person who has violated her." Pat came the reply: "No, it would be like a woman converting her molester into her son and making him regard her as his own mother ever afterwards. I have known such instances in actual life."

But for that very reason Gandhiji was most anxious that in the crisis confronting them, the Viceroy, his English advisers and the Englishmen in India in general did nothing that was not strictly right. It would need the most correct dealing with India as a whole on their part to leave no bitter memory behind. His mind was not altogether free from misgivings on that score.

Loose talk had been going on that His Majesty's Government might enter into agreements—military or other—on a differential basis with the Indian Union and Pakistan respectively which might possibly tend to show a preference for one rather than the other. Gandhiji saw a great potential for mischief in this. Adverting to it he suggested to the Viceroy that "an announcement should be made to the effect that it was His Majesty's Government's wish, either to enter into tripartite arrangements with both the Dominions, or to have identical bilateral agreements with each of them; and that in any event, there would be

no question of differentiation."[3] Mountbatten liked Gandhiji's suggestion. "I will follow it up with H.M.G. Perhaps the Prime Minister would give an assurance in debate in Parliament," he replied.[4] No such assurance, however, was given.

If Gandhiji's advice had been adopted, it might have provided an incentive to the two Dominions to compose their differences. Or, if they continued to be foolish, Great Britain would at least not have to sort out the dirty linen of two members of the Commonwealth perpetually at quarrel with each other. But this was not done and soon Great Britain was faced by the very contingency that Gandhiji had tried to forestall.

Later the tide of fratricidal fury swept over the two Dominions and they were on the brink of war with each other. The Muslim League (now the Pakistan Government) having acquired a taste for successful "litigation" which under British umpireship had enabled it to get away with what ordinarily would have been laughed out of court as unbelievably fantastic, tried to carry the same game into the Commonwealth by asking it to intervene in the dispute about Kashmir and to send observers to investigate and report (with or without observers from United Nations Organisation) on the excesses committed by either side in the Punjab since the partition. Obviously, it banked upon the currency that its "two nation theory" had obtained by virtue of India's partition, and hoped that it would secure Kashmir on that basis after it had failed to do so by chicanery and force.

Gandhiji felt that nothing could be more demoralising for Britain, India and Pakistan than a revival of this old "litigation" between the two Dominions at the bar of the Commonwealth. He, therefore, suggested that Mr. Attlee, as the author of the scheme for Indian independence, should free himself from the untenable position of having within the Commonwealth two Dominions, if they could not live together as sisters. This he could do by ascertaining "unofficially" through some means of his own choice as to which of the two parties was "overwhelmingly in the wrong and then withdrawing every British officer from the service of the wrong party." If this step did not prove effective, the second step should be to expel the wrong party from the Commonwealth.

Both Lord Mountbatten and Mr. Attlee, it seems, failed to grasp the point of Gandhiji's suggestion. His suggestion was not intended to revive the British umpireship or to introduce the United Nations' umpireship in place of or in addition to Britain's but to prevent the Commonwealth from playing a role that had proved to be unhealthy. He did not want adjudication or apportionment of blame as between the Indian Union and Pakistan. He only wished Mr. Attlee, if he was convinced, as Gandhiji was, of the soundness of the suggestion, to institute the inquiry for his own guidance, possibly through diplomatic

channels. Informal approach would avoid all legal precedents in dealing with an unprecedented situation. It would have meant breaking new ground in Commonwealth relations which had hitherto been regulated by established legal procedures and constitutional precedents. Mr. Attlee had in short to exercise moral leadership which, as the Prime Minister of the seniormost member of the Commonwealth, he was in an exceptionally privileged position to do. But Gandhiji's proposition was, perhaps, of too startingly novel a character for its significance to be fully taken in at once and so its possibilities remained unexplored. Mr. Attlee did, however, wisely discourage Pakistan's attempts to exploit the Commonwealth for the continuation of its quarrel with India.

For over a quarter of a century Gandhiji had fought the British system in India but he had retained his admiration for the outstanding traits of the British character, their love of individual freedom and respect for tradition, doggedness, perseverance and sense of discipline. He cherished the hope that now that the British had put their rule in India into voluntary liquidation, they would go further along that road and give the lead to the world by placing Commonwealth relations on the basis of equality, freedom, non-exploitation, renunciation of racial discrimination and use of force. Such a Commonwealth would be a step towards the realisation of a world federation in which universal toleration would rule and war and private armaments would be outlawed. If such a Commonwealth of free nations were brought into being, he would have welcomed India's joining it. But he had no use for a Commonwealth in which racial discrimination, colonialism, exploitation, and other imperialistic evils still prevailed. He made no secret of the fact that he failed to see any sign of Rama Rajya or the Kingdom of God emerging from the coming Dominion Status. Therefore he said that unless the character and basis of the Commonwealth were transformed, both the new States should, as soon as they had framed their constitutions, declare complete independence, go out of the exclusive family of British Dominions and aim at a family of independent States which would necessarily rule out all internal armies.

Democracy and the military spirit he held to be mutually contradictory. A democrat relied upon the force "not of the arms that his State could flaunt in the face of the world but on the moral force his State could put at the disposal of the world."[5] Gandhiji wanted India to prepare herself for that consummation. If by India's effort such a world federation of free and independent States was evolved, the hope of the coming of the Kingdom of God—otherwise known as Rama Rajya — might legitimately be entertained.

India's future relations with Britain were still an issue when the great call came. The last time Gandhiji touched upon the subject was a few days before the end when a formula was being examined

by which the Indian Union would become a Republic and yet remain in the Commonwealth. An unofficial emissary from Lord Mountbatten came to sound Gandhiji. After he had left, Gandhiji remarked that he for one would never be reconciled to it so long as racial discrimination against Indian nationals was not banished from the Commonwealth countries. But in that he was afraid, he admitted, he would perhaps find himself in a minority of one.

3

A couple of days after the leaders of the three parties had given their assent to the partition plan, a small high-powered committee, consisting of representatives of the Congress, the League, and the Sikhs was set up. The Viceroy was to be its chairman. It was to consider the various problems arising out of the partition decision and transfer of power. After the Punjab and Bengal had decided in favour of their own partition, this committee was replaced by a Partition Council, with wider powers and authority to take final decisions. A note had been put out in the Press to the effect that the parties had "agreed" before the Viceroy that the partition was to be effected in a "brotherly spirit". But experience had taught Gandhiji to be sceptical about the value of such platitudes. "I am afraid, we are deceiving ourselves and the people," he remarked in the course of a conversation. In the midst of the prevailing unreality, his soul ached for a touch of reality. Sweet words buttered no parsnips, he observed in one of his prayer addresses. The world was tired of eloquent speeches and smooth phrases. He would dance with joy, he said, when he found words followed by corresponding action.

The Partition Council decided to invite Sir Cyril Radcliffe to serve as chairman of the Punjab and Bengal Boundary Commissions. His terms of reference were to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of either Province "on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims". In doing so, he was also to take into account "other factors". This left room for both parties to live in the hope that the Boundary Commission might give them more than could be reasonably expected—the Muslim League hoping that this might give them Calcutta, and the Sikhs hoping that property and other qualifications would give them a better chance in the Punjab.

These hopes and expectations on both sides, which in the nature of things could not all be fulfilled, did not help to ease the existing tension. Excitement reached a fever pitch in the second half of June in Lahore and Amritsar. Both the cities were in the debatable zone in the Punjab. Both had predominantly Hindu and Sikh population

and were built up largely by their capital and enterprise. The bulk of the commercial and industrial assets as also immovable and movable property was owned by them. Amritsar was besides the religious capital of the Sikhs. The Muslim League demanded the inclusion of both the cities in Pakistan on "political grounds". Arson and loot became the order of the day in both these places following upon the announcement of the partition plan. In Lahore more than one hundred houses were reported to have been burnt in the course of a single day early in the third week of June by systematic dropping of fire-balls through chimneys and skylights from contiguous roofs. Stabbing of innocent persons by masked men in broad daylight went on throughout the city. Someone reported to Gandhiji with ill-concealed satisfaction that in Amritsar the parties were "evenly matched" and were bent on "fighting it out"! What the "it" was, remarked Gandhiji painfully, he was at a loss to understand. "Is the suicidal strife to continue—Pakistan or no Pakistan? Why cannot the combatants honestly come together and decide to stop arson and murder? Must we look to the ruling race to suppress the riots? The end of alien rule is imminent. Would to God that the people stopped the savagery and showed mankind the better and the braver way!"

As the month of June wore on, refugees and their problems increasingly claimed Gandhiji's time and attention more and more. Crowds of refugees could be seen at all hours hovering round the Bhangi Colony. Some of them, who had come to him with their tale of woe, persuaded him to pay a visit to Hardwar, where no less than 32,000 of them from Rawalpindi and other parts of the Punjab were huddled together in about half a dozen relief camps.

On the morning of the 21st June, accompanied by Pandit Nehru, Gandhiji left by car for Hardwar. The weather was sultry, the heat blistering. As soon as they arrived at their destination after a 120 mile drive, the refugees pressed in on all sides, forming a solid wall of smelling, perspiring flesh which made one gasp for breath. The bustle and din, the yelling of the crowd and the wail of the afflicted filled the air; dust and flies hung in a thick cloud over the refugee camps. There was complete lack of sanitation and other amenities. The officer in charge of the camps had come with garlands to welcome Gandhiji. These he had hurriedly to put behind him when he received from the Mahatma a trouncing for his "thoughtlessness" which he must have remembered for life. Gandhiji gave the organisers appropriate advice about camp arrangements and administered what comfort he could to the refugees. In the afternoon, after a gruelling day, which left him not a moment's respite, he started on his return journey. He was fatigued. For a while he dozed off—his feet resting on Pandit Nehru's lap, who gently pressed his limbs. At the usual time in the evening he sat down to prayer in the car itself. As the car sped across the

darkening landscape, the peace and quiet of the bewitching twilight hour cast its spell on everybody. Pandit Nehru sat through the prayer with his eyes closed.

4

On his return from Hardwar Gandhiji's eye caught in the papers a colourful description, flashed by Reuter's news agency, of the grand ceremonial that was scheduled to mark the introduction in Parliament of the Independence Bill, announcing the birth of "two nations".

There are occasions when thoughtlessness borders upon the mischievous. The British mind never seems to have fully realised the deep tragedy behind India's vivisection. Even the speech of Lord Pethick-Lawrence in Parliament, during the debate on the Independence Bill, betrayed a levity which one would not have expected on such an occasion. When he was an undergraduate at Cambridge, he recalled, their college porter left them one afternoon to go to his own home and told them that his wife was expecting a child that evening. Next morning he came back with rather long face and reported that instead of the single child that he was expecting to receive into his home, his wife had presented him with twins! "Something like that has happened in India. Mother India has been in labour for a very long time, and everyone had been wondering what would be the character of the infant that would come into being. Lo and behold! Instead of one State emerging from the womb of Mother India, twin States are emerging, as described in this Bill."

Gandhiji had given credit to the British Government for their claim that they regarded Indian unity as their proudest achievement and deplored its dismemberment which they hoped would be temporary. The Viceroy had even told the Indian leaders that an escape clause had especially been incorporated in the Bill to enable the seceders to come back into the Union by mutual agreement. And now it seemed, if the language of Reuter's message was to be relied upon, that Parliament was going to set its imprimatur on India's partition and that on the basis of the "two nation" theory with a fanfare which was wholly incompatible with the spirit of what the Viceroy had been telling them.

"The papers today talk of a grand ceremonial to take place in London over the division of India into 'two nations' which were only the other day one nation," remarked Gandhiji in his prayer meeting on the 23rd June. "What is there to gloat over in the tragedy? We have hugged the belief that though we part, we do so as friends and brothers belonging to one family. Now, if the newspaper report is

correct, the British will make of us 'two nations' and that with a flourish of trumpets. Is that to be the parting shot? I hope not."

How were the people going to meet this challenge? —he asked. "This division of India with sub-division of Provinces puts us on our mettle. . . . If the major partner is true to his salt, the foreshadowed wisdom can be confounded not in the shape of avoiding partition, however distasteful it might be, but by right behaviour on the part of the major partner, by always acting as one nation, by refusing to treat Muslim minorities as aliens in their own home."

To Sardar Patel he wrote: "Look at Reuter's wire in today's papers. The Bill will create two nations! ! ! What is the value then of these pompous talks that are going on here? If you have not given your consent to it you can prevent this crime (against the Indian nation). After the Bill is passed, nobody is going to listen to you."[6]

A few days later, Gandhiji received a note from the Viceroy that Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and he, all felt that Gandhiji should "unquestionably be shown" the Indian Independence Bill. Accordingly, next morning he went with the Congress leaders to the Viceroy's House. His immediate reactions to the draft Bill are on record scribbled partly in pencil, partly in ink:

1. Some declaration should be made, if it cannot be included in the Statute, that Dominion Status would be temporary.
2. That it would be equal treatment for the two.
3. There is nothing to show that Pakistan is a seceder and that entity of India is retained in spite.
4. No Province can go over to the other Dominion without consent.
5. Pakistan Assembly will not meet before the appointed date.
6. The States position is uncomfortably weak. May 1946 statement should not be used to block progress.

The irritation had blown off but the steely barb had, if possible, entered even deeper into his heart, when he addressed his prayer meeting on the 5th July. He was not disposed, he remarked, like many critics to read a sinister meaning in the Bill. The fact that there were two Indias instead of one was bad enough in itself. Both had the same status, and the Muslim League was entitled to full credit for bringing about a state of things which seemed to be impossible only, as it were, the day before. They had undone the solemn declaration of the Cabinet Mission. They had succeeded in compelling consent from the Congress and the Sikhs to the division. *The thing that was in itself*

bad did not become good because the parties concerned had accepted it, no matter that the causes dictating acceptance were different in each case. It was hardly any comfort that Jinnah did not get all he wanted. The difference was not at all in kind. He wanted a sovereign State. That he had in the fullest measure.

As he read and re-read the Bill, Gandhiji went on to say, he saw that the three parties had subjected themselves consciously or unconsciously to public judgment in terms of the Bill. Though the British were divesting themselves of all power, by becoming party to the division and having two members in the Commonwealth family possessing conflicting ideals and interests, they had put themselves to be weighed in the balance. So long as the two parts had any connection with Great Britain, the latter would be judged by action following the Bill rather than by its language, however generous and just it might read. He was afraid it would be a superhuman task to reconcile conflicting interests and treat them equally. What would happen if one decided to go out of the Commonwealth when the Constitution Act was passed?

The relation of the Princes remained in a most unsatisfactory condition. Here, again, British honour was at stake. The British would certainly be blamed if any mishap occurred.

Some of the doings of the authorities in Pakistan had given ground for the fear, he went on to point out, that there would be an attempt to estrange scheduled classes in Pakistan from their Hindu brethren. There had been reports of Muslim League speakers holding forth that the scheduled classes in Pakistan could have separate electorates. (Separate electorates were later forced upon the minorities in Pakistan in the teeth of their opposition). Was that to be a call for joining Islam of the Pakistan type? — Gandhiji asked. There had been tales of forcible conversions. Was Pakistan a means of converting non-caste-Hindus to a special brand of Islam? The world was fast growing out of the dogmas and creeds which had so sickened and confused it that it had begun to deny the very existence of the Maker. Happily that stage of negation was quickly passing and enlightened faith in the supreme Maker of the Universe was being restored. Was the Islam of Pakistan going to be in the vanguard of that movement for the restoration of universal faith? Or, was it to pass through darkness and denial of God in the name of God?

Jinnah, Gandhiji concluded, had thus unwittingly placed Hinduism also on its trial. He had said on the previous day that those who believed in India as a nation could have no minority and majority question; all were entitled to equal privileges and equal treatment. The Hindus had the rare opportunity of refining their religion of all dross and showing by strict justness that the brand of Hinduism of the Indian Union was the same as universal religion. Thus viewed, the Indian

Independence Bill could be taken as the final examination of all the parties involved in the Bill. It was possible to turn Pakistan, which he had declared an evil, into unadulterated good, if all the forebodings were dispelled and enmities were turned into friendship and mutual distrust gave place to trust.

5

The passing of the Indian Independence Bill marked an important milestone in British annals no less than in the history of India. The wheel had come full circle two centuries after Britain had come to hold the "gorgeous East in fee". It was at best dubious glory when she came into possession of India, but the way she had liquidated her rule, said Gandhiji, unquestionably constituted "the noblest act of the British nation". This despite some qualifying aspects to which we shall come later.

"It may be said of the British Raj," observed Lord Herbert Samuel during the debate on the second reading of the Independence Bill in the House of Lords, "as Shakespeare said of the Thane of Cawdor: 'Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it.' People sometimes ask why it is that the nations are not wise enough to have their peace conferences and to make their treaties before the wars begin, instead of only at the end of years of conflict and bloodshed." Describing the Bill as "a model to all future generations . . . a treaty of peace without a war," Lord Samuel went on to say:

> The Indian people during the last half century and more have used every expression of public opinion at their command, short of open rebellion, to show what their wishes were; and, looking back, I think it is right to say in retrospect that the fact that there has been no open rebellion in India during all the stages of this dispute is very largely due to the influence of Mr. Gandhi, and to his creed of non-violence, which represents one of the essentials of the pacific spirit of the Hindu religion. But for that the course of events in India might have been very different.

Sorensen expressed the hope in his speech in the House of Commons that in course of time the partition of India would be "abridged":

> For one thing, if it is proven in the days ahead that the Hindu minority within Pakistan and the Muslim minority within India have nothing to fear, but can live together in terms of sympathy and comradeship, that should surely supply the cement which

> will ultimately unite these two peoples of India. Again, if within Pakistan on the one hand and India on the other, these two communities are dwelling together in peace and comradeship, surely it will come to be realised that there is no reason why the whole of India should not equally include those and other communities, dwelling in the same atmosphere.

A notable feature of the passing of the Bill was absence of voting at any stage in either House, Churchill having declared earlier that the plan embodied in the Bill appeared to fulfil two conditions, viz. agreement between the Indian parties, and a period of Dominion Status underlying the Cripps offer of 1942, to which all parties were pledged.

Gallachar pricked the bubble of agreement. Speaking before the House of Commons, he declared: "I do not accept the statement that the people (of India) were responsible for the partition any more than the people of Ireland were responsible for the partition of Ireland. . . . The ruling class here with their kindred in India must take responsibility."

No less plain was Lord Rankeillour, speaking in the other House. Alluding to what had happened in India nineteen centuries earlier, he described the British attitude in regard to the decision about partition and its consequences as "disclaimer of responsibility by ablution". ("When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye *to it*."[7])

Lord Pethick-Lawrence defended India's vivisection. It was much better to have a solution, he observed, in a speech in the House of Lords, that might not appear so good on paper but that commanded the real and genuine support of all sections or at any rate leading sections of India, than one which might ideally and theoretically be better but which was really planting an apple of discord in their midst.

Unfortunately, the merit claimed was theoretical only. Thanks to the forces set into motion by past British policies, there could be no genuine settlement between the warring communities through the umpireship of the British. The manner of their quitting served to plant the very apple of discord of which Lord Pethick-Lawrence was afraid. The sincerity which inspired the labours of Lord Pethick-Lawrence and Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Mountbatten, Mr. Attlee and the rest was beyond question. But the fundamental assumption on which their policies were based was false. It lacked reality. And so the very sincerity of their conviction became a hindrance in the success of their intentions. The only thing for the British power, in the existing circumstances, was to quit irrespective of the wishes of the Indian

parties, leaving them to come to a settlement among themselves as they might.

A highly conscientious section of the British people saw this clearly. It was all right for Gandhiji, they felt, to tell his people that they themselves were responsible for the partition and the partition having taken place, the only way to undo its evil non-violently was to turn the searchlight inward and remove the seeds of disunion from their own hearts, but this provided the British people with no cause for smug self-satisfaction or exoneration from their share of the responsibility. On the contrary, it required them to search their own hearts and find out how they could make a fitting atonement for the unhealthy past British policies. This feeling was set forth with burning conviction by an English friend of Gandhiji who wrote:

> I feel terribly ashamed, sad and distressed, and the more you say that India must look to her own faults and not blame Britain the worse I feel. I think I understand what you mean and why you speak thus and how determined you are to bring India through this crisis with the least bloodshed, the least bitterness and in the finest spirit possible. But I cannot escape the condemnation of my own conscience. We British have done so much to bring India to this spiritual tragedy. It may be that in the situation the present plan is the best that could be produced; it may be that India should never have allowed herself to get into the present conditions, but ultimately, surely, the blame should be laid well and truly at our door—for the past policies, the communal electorates, all the divisive influence, the way we have let things drift and have hung on to India till the situation was so overripe that human beings themselves began to go rotten morally and spiritually.
>
> Even now I am not satisfied that we are playing straight—at best we are still on the plane of political chess. . . . There is no sense of atonement whatever over here. The general reaction is that Britain had done a grand job in India and had brought her work to a grand finale. Still the same old blindness to our share in bringing India to a point where her people—or leaders anyhow—seek division on the basis of man's different approaches to God. Till the last we have held India, even while that fateful choice was made—acceptance of division rather than continuation of the upheavals and frustrations. Why did not we hand over to the established Government (we had ourselves established it) and go, leaving India really free to make decisions? What freedom of choice is there when the jailer opens only one door? To reiterate that it would have been better to go out through the other door, when that door—of Hindu-Muslim understanding—has been

more firmly barred through the decades is a mockery. . . .

I used to hope that when the day of India's freedom finally came it would be a glorious day of spiritual victory for both. It may yet be that for India. But there is little sign of it for Britain. It is very hard for the inheritors of Empire to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. . . . We seem to be spiritually dead. Yet deep within us are glorious qualities in which you for one have always believed and have tried to draw from us. You are still doing it. . . applying your non-violence in tremendous generosity of spirit. Why does it not evoke an answering response? The hang-over of our superiority is deep in us—even in our interpretation of Christ's teaching. . . . 'The non-violent man must first reduce himself to zero.' That's very hard for us Britishers, hard for everyone but particularly for us. We've been top-dogs for so long.[8]

A few days later another correspondent wrote to Gandhiji quoting Bernard Shaw's famous remark that an Englishman is never in the wrong, he does everything on principle: "He fights you on patriotic principles; he robs you on business principles; he enslaves you on imperial principles; he supports his King on loyal principles and cuts off his King's head on republican principles." He asked Gandhiji to say under which of these principles the Englishman was quitting.

Gandhiji replied: "Man had the supreme knack of deceiving himself. The Englishman was "supermost among them". He was quitting because he had discovered that it was wrong to hold India in bondage on economic and political grounds. In this he was quite sincere. But sincerity was quite consistent with self-deception. The Englishman was self-deceived in that he believed that he could not leave India to possible anarchy, if such was to be India's lot. He was quite content to leave India as a cockpit between two organised armies. Before quitting he was setting the seal of approval on the policy of playing off one community against another. And he lacked the courage to do the right so far as the Indian States were concerned. He hoped, concluded Gandhiji, that before the Britishers finally left on the 15th August at the latest, they would bring the two parties—the Congress and the Muslim League—together now that one had got all it wanted. He could do so if he willed it. On the other hand, if the Englishman left India in an uncertain condition, and left the possibility of several warring States, all independent of England and therefore of one another, there could not be a greater reflection on the British name than that. Dominion Status would then stink in his nostrils. Recent signs were portentous enough to raise his suspicion. But he did not believe in dying before one's death. He still hoped that British statesmanship would not declare utter bankruptcy but would set things right before quitting. Till then he would defer judgment.[9]

6

Next to the partition of India the division of the armed forces—"the biggest crime and the biggest headache", as Lord Ismay called it—distressed Gandhiji most. Between 1st July and 11th July the Partition Council laid down the principles which were to govern division. "The army is now being divided into Hindu and Muslims," reported Lord Selborne in the House of Lords, "in the manner in which sides are picked before a football match. It is impossible to believe that peace will be maintained."

Gandhiji had hoped that it would be possible to write into the treaty of separation itself a provision for joint defence. The proposition bristled with difficulties no doubt but if the parties had really parted as friends and not enemies, it was not unfeasible. There was something wrong in the fact, he remarked at his prayer meeting on the 6th July, that they missed the enthusiasm that should accompany such a great event as the imminent advent of full freedom. The reason for the lack of enthusiasm was no doubt to be found in the division of the country into two States which were to be turned into two armed camps. There was to be no common defence force. The army was to be divided. Preparations were being made apace to that end. They used to talk glibly during "the glorious and strenuous days of opposition to British rule" of having no army for the suppression of internecine quarrels, which would be non-existent, and they wanted no defence force against a foreign enemy. But military expenditure was now to be maintained at a very high level without any near prospect of substantial reduction. In fact there was the awful prospect of a definite increase in the military expenditure—all for fighting among themselves—and they would have the spectacle of the two newly created States engaging in a ludicrous race for the increase of armaments all for mutual slaughter! Was India's freedom a preparation for the abandonment of all they had learnt to prize as dear to them? Instead of self-glorification, he felt it was a time for deep self-introspection, self-examination and self-castigation. As the chief actor in the fight for freedom during the past thirty years, he was, he said, certainly full of searching questions within himself. "Is the fight, acclaimed as noble, to result in this—the approaching inglorious end? In deep anguish I cry with the Vedic seers, 'O Lord, Lead us from darkness into light.' "[10]

In a letter he wrote: "The 15th of August has no value in my eyes. There is no enthusiasm in anybody's face here."

The next day he proceeded to show how they could turn the calamity into a blessing. It would profit them nothing, he said, to brood

over the past or to blame this party or that. The parties having jointly accepted the situation, there was no turning back. Only the inscrutable Providence could undo what men had agreed to do. One easy and ready way out was for the Congress and the League to come together and arrive at mutual understanding without the intervention of the Viceroy. In that the League had to make the first move.

> I do not at all suggest the undoing of Pakistan. Let that be treated as an established fact beyond dispute or discussion. But they can sit together in a mud hut large enough to accommodate not more than ten representatives and undertake not to part till they have reached an agreement. I dare swear that if such an event occurs, it will be infinitely better than the Bill recognising the Independence of India cut up into two States enjoying equal status.
>
> Neither Hindus nor Muslims are happy over what is happening before their helpless selves. . . . But—it is a big BUT—I seem to be aiming at the impossible. Now that the British intervention has done the trick, how can the League be expected to come down to its adversaries and produce an agreed settlement as between brothers and friends?
>
> There is an alternative which is also almost, if not quite, as difficult. The creation of two opposing armies out of one, hitherto with one and a common goal, whatever it is, must frighten every lover of India. Would the two armies be created, not in order to face and fight a common danger but to destroy one another and demonstrate to a gaping world that they were unfit for any other purpose but to fight one another unto death?
>
> I have put the prospect in its awful nakedness so that everyone may see and shun it. The alternative escape is undoubtedly attractive. Will the vast mass of Hindus and those who had joined them in the struggle for independence realise the danger in its proper perspective and rise to the occasion and swear even now that they do not wish to have any army at all or at least refuse ever to use it against their Muslim brethren whether in the Union or outside it in Pakistan? This proposal is tantamount to asking Hindus and their associates to turn thirty years' weakness into strength of great beauty. Perhaps to state the problem thus is to demonstrate its absurdity. May be. God has been known before now to turn man's folly into wisdom. Anyway the effort is worth making for the sake of all the parties who have subscribed to the dangerous division of the army into two self-destroying warring camps.

Seeing that India was cut in twain, Gandhiji remarked at his prayer meeting on the 10th July, they had to consider their conduct accordingly. Unfortunately, it had become the fashion to act as if they were enemies one of the other. Some were saying that in 1944 he had "danced attendance" on Jinnah for 18 days and they were now reaping the fruit. He challenged that aspersion. He had made an offer to Jinnah, he said, which was in the interest of all concerned. If Jinnah had accepted his offer, he could have been master in what might have been called Pakistan areas. But they would have had one India before the whole world, without any fear of domination by a third party. All the bloodshed, loot and arson would then have been averted. Now they were "snarling at one another". He could scent no independence in that barbarous state. He could not be enthusiastic about the independence that was coming unless the look of things changed during the next 35 days.

Why could they not, he asked reverting to the theme a few days later, remain united for the object of facing foreign aggression? The present mode of division might well lead to internal warfare between the two armies who might even look upon each other as rivals. That would be a tragedy too deep for tears. For years they had said that they did not want any army. He still stood by that statement, said Gandhiji, but others did not. A new generation had arisen. Congressmen were not bound by what they had done during India's bondage. No blame could be imputed to them for the change. There was violence in people's hearts. The British Government's imminent withdrawal had set free the bottled up violence which was finding free vent against their own kith and kin. Almost every Province wanted military assistance. If they did not wake up betimes, there was even danger of a military dictatorship being established. Was this freedom?—he asked.

7

As the 15th August drew near, Gandhiji noted with growing apprehension the portents that were gathering on the horizon. Vivisection of the country was the price that India had paid to keep out chaos and civil-war. But from the look of things, India after partition was heading for a worse chaos and civil-war. And they would not then have even the administrative machinery of undivided India to cope with it.

Jinnah had, in a Press conference, again assured complete freedom of faith and religious worship and full security of life and property to all the minorities in Pakistan. But there was a wide gulf between profession and performance. In Sind non-Muslims were leaving their homes. He wondered, remarked Gandhiji, if this meant that till Pakistan

was established, all those assurances would lie in cold storage and the minorities would have to wait till the 15th August for these assurances to come into operation?

Nationalist Muslims were being threatened by prominent Leaguers that after Pakistan was established, they would be tried and hanged as fifth columnists and Quislings in the manner of the Nuremberg's "war criminals". Lord Mountbatten had been able to incorporate in a Partition Council statement a solemn assurance by both the parties of guarantee of civil rights for minorities and former political opponents. But guarantees for the future that were belied by present performance had absolutely no value in Gandhiji's eyes. He felt deeply worried at the complacency with which those concerned seemed to regard repeated, flagrant violations of solemn guarantees, while they deceived themselves with the hope that this would ultimately lead to peace. He knew how inexorable was the working of the moral law and how inevitable the penalty when that law is trifled with.

Sharing his forebodings with the congregation at his prayer meeting Gandhiji remarked that it was clear to him that the coming 15th August could be no day for rejoicing whilst the minorities contemplated the day with a heavy heart. "It must be a day for prayer and deep heart-searching. There is one condition on which it might become a day of universal rejoicing in spite of the division. Let both try from now to become true friends so that they are ready on the 15th August to give themselves to rejoicing."[11]

Friends remonstrated with him. After all, the freedom for which he had fought was at their door-step; why did he not rejoice with them? Gandhiji admitted that political freedom was a necessary prelude to economic freedom or moral progress. But the Swaraj of their dreams was still far off. He had never been defeated in spirit. He had been a rebel and a fighter all his life. He could not weep nor could he make others do so. Their leaders believed that what they had done was for the good of the country. If they were happy it was no part of his duty to seek to deprive them of happiness. If the Congress decided on celebration of the 15th August, those who felt like joining must join them. But the real day of rejoicing for them all would be when Hindus and Muslims would live as brothers. A non-Muslim friend living in the Pakistan area had written to him: "You people are talking loud about the celebration of 15th August next as the independence day. Have you thought how we, the non-Muslims of Pakistan, are to celebrate the day and with what joy in our hearts?" What answer had they for these fears?

Gandhiji viewed with growing uneasiness and alarm the prospect of counter-communalism that was being bred in the Indian Union by continued ill-treatment of the minorities on the other side. Already some ugly symptoms had begun to appear. The President

of a Provincial Congress Committee was reported to have said in a public speech that if any harm befell the Hindus in Pakistan, the Congress would "after the 15th August" take reprisals in India. Gandhiji immediately wrote to him :

> You are enunciating the doctrine of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Only you will wait till the 15th August. Both these statements ill comport with the Congress policy. Has the Congress policy changed? Congressmen have changed, I know, but I am not aware of any change in the Congress constitution.
>
> Secondly, if Congress policy or practice has changed, who compels you to wait till 15th August? Who will be responsible for the incalculable harm that will have overtaken the people of India as well as Pakistan in the meantime ? Who can control the people if they go mad and launch on a course of retaliation?[12]

Some characterised Gandhiji's speeches as depressing and said that he should not speak at all. It was true, Gandhiji replied, that he was in disagreement with what many of his close colleagues and friends were saying or doing. But if they analysed their difference, they would find that they all stemmed from one fundamental fact: Non-violence was his creed; with the Congress it had been always a policy only. The Congress had every right to change its policy when necessary. But while a policy lasted it had to be enforced with the same thoroughness, honesty and faith as a creed. "But though according to the Congress constitution the policy abides, the practice has undoubtedly altered the policy. Why should not the makers of the present Congress change their policy *in fact* ? The law will take care of itself."[13]

In the constitution the word used was "peaceful", not "non-violent". Gandhiji recalled how in Bombay in 1934, he had tried hard to have the word "peaceful" replaced by "non-violent" but had failed. "Therefore, it is open to give the word peaceful a meaning probably "less than non-violent". I see none. But my opinion is irrelevant. It is for the savants to determine the difference, if any. All that you and I need to realise is that the Congress practice is not non-violent today in the accepted sense of the term. If the Congress was pledged to the policy of non-violence, there would be no army supported by it. But she supports an army which may eat up the civilians and establish military rule in India unless the people listen to me. I cannot give up whilst there is breath left in me."[14]

The Dutch Ambassador, Mr. Winkleman, saw Gandhiji in the second week of July. "Do you expect a lot of trouble still?" he asked.

"If I can forecast the future," replied Gandhiji, "there is more trouble in store for us before we settle down."

"What about Russia?" asked another interviewer. "It is a big question at the moment."

"It will remain so for some time," Gandhiji replied.

"Do you think Russia is a threat to world peace and the peace of India?"

"Any great power may be a threat."

"Is the Communist party very strong in India numerically or in terms of real support?"

"No."

"Do you think the peasants may be ready to receive their message?"

"Not at the moment."

"What about the relations between India and Pakistan? Do you think there will be difficulties or complications after independence?"

"There may be or there may not be."

Arthur Moore, a former editor of *The Statesman* dropped in on another day. He had first met Gandhiji in 1924 when Gandhiji was fasting in Delhi for Hindu-Muslim unity. That method Moore had regarded as "a complete failure". He still seemed to be of the same view. "It does not look like success so far," he remarked referring to the Delhi fast of 1924. "But there must be some result," he added, more for politeness' sake than anything else or, perhaps, as an expression of hope rather than an affirmation of faith.

"I have no doubt about it."

"It depends upon you, Gandhiji. You are the biggest force."

"I am a spent bullet."

"Oh, no; you are not. Now is the time. What can be done?"

"Pray."

"Your word counts. Just now Hindus are worked up. . . . It is that feeling that one wants to allay."

"I am doing my utmost. Personally I do not think this mood will stay."

Mr. Moore thought Sardar Patel's attitude to be bellicose. Gandhiji corrected him: "You do not know the Sardar. He is not vindictive or communal. But he does not share my belief that non-violence can conquer everything. He used to be a whole-hogger once. He is so no more."

"The Sardar is the most popular leader. Perhaps that explains it."

"No, the Sardar is the strong man. He will not let any difficulty baffle him. That is the explanation."

"There is a growing feeling of retaliation in the people's minds. It is bad."

"I do not think this feeling will stay. If it does, it will mean good-bye to freedom. India will commit suicide."

"The Sardar and some Congressmen feel that the area ceded to Pakistan has to be taken back. It irritates the Muslims."

"There you are greatly mistaken. Personally I feel Pakistan has come to stay. They realise it."

"On that basis friendship is possible."

"Pakistan has come but how friendship can be achieved I do not know."

"I feel heart unity is more important than political boundaries."

"I grant that any day. I am working at it against heavy odds."

"But you are not a spent force Gandhiji," remarked Mr. Moore at parting. "Things have to get worse before they get better. It is darkest before dawn."

CHAPTER XIV

SEARCH FOR THE PANACEA

1

QUESTIONS CONTINUED to be addressed to Gandhiji: Why had he surrendered on the issue of partition? How did he account for the growing violence among his people and on the part of political parties for the furtherance of political ends? Was this the upshot of non-violence practised for thirty years to end British rule? Did his non-violence still have a message for the world?

Gandhiji answered them all. The happenings referred to by the questioners could prove only his bankruptcy, not that of non-violence. He had admitted that the non-violence that was practised during the past thirty years was not non-violence but passive resistance. He was further prepared to admit that such non-violence could have no field in the altered circumstances. India had no experience of the non-violence of the strong. It served no purpose for him to repeat, he reiterated, that the non-violence of the strong was the strongest force in the world. That truth required constant and extensive demonstration. This he was endeavouring to do to the best of his ability. "What if the best of my ability is very little? May I not be living in a fool's paradise? Why should I ask people to follow me in the fruitless search? These are pertinent questions. My answer is quite simple. I ask nobody to follow me. Everyone should follow his or her own inner voice. If he or she has no ears to listen to it, they should do the best they can. In no case should they imitate others like sheep."[1]

If he was sure that India was going the wrong way, asked another questioner, why did he associate with the wrongdoers? Why did he not plough his own lonely furrow secure in the faith that if he was right, his erstwhile friends and followers would seek him out? "I regarded this as a very fair question," Gandhiji answered. "I must not try to argue against it. All I can say is that my faith is as strong as ever. It is quite possible, however, that my technique is faulty. There are old and tried precedents to guide one in such complexity. Only no one should act mechanically. Hence I can say to all my counsellors that they should be patient with me and even share my belief that there is no hope for the aching world except through the strait and narrow path of non-violence. Millions like me may fail to prove the truth in

their own lives, that would be their failure, never of the eternal law."[2]

He was not a "spent bullet" still some others told him. Nor was it correct to say that the country was not behind him. "Give us the lead and you will see for yourself whether the country is behind you or not."

Such talk served only to amuse him; they did not know what they were talking about.

"The decision about Pakistan is of course wrong," he wrote to an Ashram colleague. "But against whom am I to fight and to what end?"[3]

An old veteran was feeling disconsolate over the partition. Gandhiji wrote to him: "With whom will you fight? Not the British."[4]

He had fought against the white supremacy in South Africa for twenty years, he remarked, and for over a quarter of a century against the British power in India without being dismayed but the very idea of wielding the weapon of non-cooperation against his own countrymen made him shudder. Unless it became an imperative or an inescapable duty, he could not resort to non-cooperation with his colleagues because their judgment differed from his own.

"One earns the right of the fiercest Satyagraha," Gandhiji once remarked to a co-worker, "when one has convinced (those concerned) of one's affection for them and one's sound judgment, and *when one is sure of not being in the slightest degree ruffled if one's judgment is not accepted.*" In other words, "*there should be love, faculty for clear perception and complete toleration to enable one to criticise.*"[5] That was what had enabled him to retain, in spite of differences, the loyalty, faith and friendship of his colleagues, co-workers and friends all through life and to harmonise and harness even their dissent in the cause of the non-violent struggle for freedom. He was a born democrat, and when the country and his trusted colleagues accepted partition, under what they felt to be the compulsion of circumstance, he could not, he said, very well oppose it by non-cooperation. Satyagraha is not a tactical weapon like T. N. T. that can be used to overbear or blast opposition. Only by patient argument, loyal service and striking demonstration of the efficacy of his method could he hope to convert his colleagues — not by imposing his views upon them. He was no Ferrovious to give a poor heathen a broken bone to help him find faith in the Prince of Peace! He could not threaten his colleagues with sabotage when they were engaged in a life and death tussle with the British power and the dark forces of communalism because they felt unable to go his way though their goal was the same as his. They continued to be his best friends though for the time he had lost his hold on them.

During the non-cooperation campaign in the twenties he was urged by a fanatical "no-changer" to revive civil disobedience to "dish" the Swarajist. Under Deshbandhu C. R. Das's lead these

veterans had broken away from Gandhiji's programme and decided to enter the Councils. Their programme was to carry on "boycott from within". Gandhiji refused. Though he did not approve of the Swarajist programme, it did not take him a single second to make his choice as between Swarajists and the Government. He could do nothing, he told the "no-change" enthusiast, that might weaken the Swarajists vis-a-vis the Government. The Swarajist mentality had "come to stay". The requisite atmosphere for civil disobedience was lacking. Civil disobedience was not for the fanatic. Instead of fighting the Swarajists, he dissolved the party that had been formed in support of his political programme ("no-changers") and asked those who adhered to him to prove their faith in non-violence by engaging in constructive work. After C. R. Das's death he went a step further. To strengthen the Swarajists' hands he decided, at the All-India Congress Committee meeting at Patna, to make over the Congress organisation to them and he continued to give them his best advice and guidance, whenever it was sought. The wisdom of the "Patna surrender" of 1925 was vindicated in 1930 when his Old Guard once more rallied round him in the Salt Satyagraha and made history.

The history repeated itself in 1940 when the Congress declared that if the British Government accepted their terms, it would join the war on the side of the Allies. Gandhiji refused to obstruct. He let his colleagues follow their judgment though he told them that they were wrong. The reason he gave for pursuing this course was significant: "I had produced a draft resolution which almost all thought was the best, if they could bring to bear a living belief in non-violence through and through, or if they could truthfully say that such was the belief of their constituencies. Some had neither and some had individually the required faith. . . . Rajaji . . . was as certain of his position as I was of mine. . . . I could not carry the Committee with me. . . . *I at once saw as clear as daylight that, if my position was not acceptable, Rajaji's was the only real alternative.*"[6] (Italics mine).

During the Simla Conference in 1945, Gandhiji was asked by Preston Grover of the Associated Press of America, why he had not asserted himself against his colleagues when in the teeth of his advice they accepted the "parity formula". Not only Jinnah but Lord Wavell, most of India and all observers at the conference, said Grover, looked upon him as the head of the Congress regardless of the technicality that he was not a member. No settlement would be reached without his consent.

"That is both right and wrong," Gandhiji replied. "That impression has been created because generally my advice is accepted. But technically and substantially it is wrong."

Preston Grover insisted that Gandhiji's was the controlling voice in the Congress. To this Gandhiji demurred: "Not even that. They

can shunt me out at any time. . . . *If I tried to override them, I might succeed for once. But the moment I try to cling to power I fall, never to rise again.* That is not my temperament."

Finally, at the time of the Cabinet Mission negotiations in June, 1946, he not only did not force the Congress leaders to follow his "instinct" which was against the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan, but insisted that unless what he told them appealed to their head and heart, the only right thing for them was to follow their own judgment and go their way.

To act at the time of partition otherwise than he did would have been out of character with his entire past and with the essence of Satyagraha. The Congress leaders disliked partition as much as he. They had agreed to it as the last resort. They did not feel they had made a mistake. They felt they reflected the mood of the country.

Gandhiji was differently made. He would have "let the whole country be reduced to ashes" rather than accept partition at British hands. But then non-violence was his creed; it was not that of the Congress. That made all the difference between his outlook and the Congress leaders'. Badshah Khan was the only leader who believed in non-violence as a creed. "Even he has not imbibed the doctrine through and through."[7]

As early as 1940, Gandhiji had come to the conclusion that non-violent mass action could be successfully organised only on the foundation of constructive work. He admitted: "In placing civil disobedience before constructive work I was wrong. . . . I feared that I should estrange my co-workers and so carried on with imperfect Ahimsa."[8] He had hoped that faith in non-violence would come from experience if they sincerely and honestly carried out the discipline of non-violence even as a policy.

> "Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
> That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,
> Of habits devil, is angel yet in this, —
> That to the use of actions fair and good
> He likewise gives a frock or livery
> That aptly is put on."

This expectation of his was not fulfilled. In an intimate talk with some friends he laid bare the root cause of the failure: "I thought our struggle was based on non-violence, whereas in reality it was no more than passive resistance . . . which leads naturally to armed resistance, whenever it is possible."[9] He recalled how, on one occasion, in South Africa, the English chairman of one of his meetings had remarked that it was natural for Gandhiji to ask his people to resort to "passive resistance" as they were unarmed and weak. He had

promptly contradicted that statement. It was not true, he had answered, that he had presented non-violence to his countrymen in their struggle in the Transvaal as the weapon of the weak. Their campaign was not one of passive resistance. It was based on non-violence — soul force — which is diametrically opposed to physical force and infinitely superior:

> Intoxicated by my success in South Africa I came to India. Here too the struggle bore fruit. But I have now realised it was not based on non-violence of the brave. If I had known so then, I would not have launched the struggle. But God wanted to take that work from me. So He blurred my vision. It was because our struggle was not non-violent that there is all the loot, arson and worse which we are witnessing.[10]

It was this that had ultimately led the Congress to accept early transfer of power on Dominion Status basis at the cost of partition at British hands in preference to a home-made solution, by agreement among themselves if possible or by fighting it out if necessary, after the British had left.

A friend tried to commit him to a statement that some time ago he himself had made, viz., that the non-violence upon which their struggle was based was of the weak. That statement was mistaken, Gandhiji answered. There was no such thing as non-violence of the weak. Non-violence of the weak was a contradiction in terms.[11] If they really had an experience of true non-violence, they would not have discarded it in the fight among themselves, because they would have then known that there is nothing more powerful than non-violence. If only they had the non-violence of the brave, that was the one thing that could have prevented partition. But such non-violence could not be developed overnight. That was why he felt helpless in the face of the impending vivisection of India.

He had never experienced such dark despair as was within him at the time, he continued. He was a born fighter who knew no failure. But at the time he was groping in the dark.

"But why should you feel despondent?" the friend persisted.

"I see clearly," replied Gandhiji, "that if the country cannot be turned to non-violence, it will be bad for it and bad for the world. It will mean good-bye to freedom. It might even mean a military dictatorship. I am day and night thinking how non-violence of the brave can be cultivated. I said at the Asian Relations Conference that I hoped that the fragrance of India's non-violence would permeate the whole world. I often wonder if that hope will materialise."[12]

To a co-worker he wrote: "It is difficult, if not impossible, for me to take charge of the Congress. Who listens to me today? And why

should anyone listen? Much of what is going on around us is distressing. What can we do?"

This then is the explanation of Gandhiji's refusal to raise the standard of revolt against the Congress in order to undo partition.

To sum up: (1) Gandhiji even all alone would have given battle to the British Government if they had dared to impose partition on India without agreement between the Indian parties. As it turned out, the Congress High Command had to assent to the partition proposal under what they felt to be the compulsion of circumstances. (2) The majority of those who opposed the partition of India at that stage were actuated by the communal sentiment which was sweeping over the country. They had repudiated non-violence. He had even less in common with them than with the Congress leaders who shared his ideal, but lacking his faith, as responsible men, felt unable to go his way. He would have risked chaos and would have urged the country to do likewise if they could meet chaos by non-violence. But he could not, in order to undo partition, deliberately plunge the country into chaos by joining hands with the communalists and those who had repudiated non-violence. (3) By overriding the decision of his colleagues he might have prevented partition. But it would have been at the cost of disrupting the Congress and the non-violent struggle for freedom which it had been carrying on for the last 25 years. He did not believe in curing the patient at the cost of the patient's life. (4) We have in black and white the testimony of the author of Satyagraha himself that these were the considerations that weighed with him. One cannot lightly brush aside such testimony in the case of one who lived only to seek God's truth and sealed it by his death, and who carried self-examination and self-revelation sometimes even to the point almost of self-desecration. The two notable occasions when he "asserted" himself against the Congress leadership were (a) on the eve of the non-cooperation movement in 1920, and (b) at the time of the "Quit India" movement in 1942. On both these occasions the public opinion was overwhelmingly behind him, but, owing to inexperience or confused thinking, the Congress leadership was running against it in almost suicidal disregard of the consequences. It was not so in the present case. When he had said that he would offer himself to be divided before India was divided, he believed he was voicing public opinion. But he had since found that the public opinion, at least the vocal part of it, preferred partition to chaos. The Congress leaders were only voicing the popular feeling. In these circumstances, it would have been neither democracy nor non-violence nor Satyagraha but sheer spite, sabotage, to raise the standard of revolt against them, especially after they had admitted their helplessness to meet chaos by non-violence and he was not in a position to take over their burden. (5) The only thing that

could have prevented partition in the situation then obtaining was India's capacity to face chaos by non-violence. This was lacking and it could not be developed overnight. That being so, the only course for the Congress leaders was the one that they had adopted. That did not make what was inherently bad good, but as things stood, there was no help. The penalty of partition had to be paid and unity realised through some other way.

Since freedom for everybody to follow his best judgment and integration of opposing view points is the foundation on which the practice of non-violence — especially in relation to society — rests, a situation may sometimes arise in which a votary of non-violence may feel the need to endorse a decision which he himself would not have made. The present occasion was one such. Gandhiji told all those who came to him that while he did not like the division any more than they, now that it was a *fait accompli*, it was up to them, as practical men, by correct conduct to lessen the evil and eventually even to bring good out of it.

"I looked around me and found," wrote the author of *Earthly Paradise*, "how men fight and loose the battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes about, it turns out not to be what they meant and other men have to fight for what they meant, under another name." That was what had happened. Outwardly, the Quit India movement had been put down by savage repression, but independence came in spite of it, and when it came it turned out to be not the independence that India had dreamt of. It left us vivisected and bleeding, with brother's arm raised against brother in a bloody conflict. Practical idealist that Gandhiji was, he clearly saw that Indian unity would now have to be realised by treading a long, arduous path which would put everybody's sincerity to the test and call for a thorough cleansing of the heart on the part of all. In a letter to one of his valued Ashram colleagues, he wrote:

> Geographically India may be said to be divided. The Congress has had to agree to it. Therefore we have now to strike a different path. What that path is I have indicated. Will our hearts also be divided with the division of territory and assets? If we are true and sincere at heart, we can still conduct ourselves as if India were not partitioned.

2

Gandhiji now set himself with the same inflexible determination with which he had opposed partition, to show how the battle of unity could be won in spite of partition.

A young couple decided to fast in front of Gandhiji's residence until the impending partition was undone. Gandhiji explained to them that in this they were wholly wrong. There was, however, a way to make Pakistan inoperative. The inhabitants of the Indian Union must not divide themselves from their Muslim brethren. If the hearts of the non-Muslims were sound, the physical partition could produce no ill effect.

The couple contended that they were only doing what their conscience bade them. How could Gandhiji ask them not to act according to the dictates of their conscience? Gandhiji explained to them that it required strenuous self-discipline to be able to listen and follow the still small voice — the voice of purified reason — within. The conscience of those who lacked that discipline as that great scholar Lokamanya Tilak had pointed out, was "unawakened". The young fasting couple were obviously inexperienced. They should be guided by the voice of experience and adopt the constructive approach to the problem of unity which he had suggested. On the third day, the couple gave up their fast and promised to go back to their place and devote themselves to the work of unity.

"Do you feel that India will ultimately be united under one Central Government regardless of what the immediate settlement may be?" Gandhiji was asked by a Press correspondent.

"The future," Gandhiji replied, "will depend upon what we do in the present."[13]

But to his surprise he found that while many had urged to him to resist partition, they fell foul of him when he asked them to nullify the evil effects of partition by achieving heart-unity and by their deeds disprove the "two-nation theory". The more opposition he encountered, the more he felt that his diagnosis of the malady, of which the partition was the product, was correct and the remedy which he had suggested was the only right remedy.

Soon after the All-India Congress Committee had ratified the acceptance of the partition plan, the Chief Minister of one of the Congress Provinces, was reported to have made a statement at a public meeting that since Jinnah claimed that Muslims had a separate culture and constituted a separate nation, and had declared that in Pakistan Islamic law would prevail, Muslims in India could not expect to be treated otherwise than as aliens. They would have no citizenship rights. Pointing to a Muslim Cabinet colleague of his, sitting next to him, the report went on to say, the Chief Minister jocularly observed that he (the Muslim Minister) would not only have to quit the Cabinet but he would not be allowed to live in the Province. He would have to seek shelter in Pakistan.

Gandhiji took this as a red signal. In the course of a prayer address he characterised the speech, even though made in a lighter

vein, as "most unfortunate". The administrators of the Provinces composing the Indian Union had to show by their action that, no matter what happened across the border in the so-called Pakistan Provinces, they would be strictly just and fair in their treatment of their Muslim brethren. Otherwise they would only fall into the trap laid for them. This did not mean that to appease the Muslims they should concede to them what was intrinsically not right. Separate electorate was an instance in point. It was a divisive artifice planted by the alien power in their midst to serve as an apple of discord. The foundation of true friendship could not be laid on such dubious concessions.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the Food Minister, had received about forty thousand postcards, thirty thousand letters and thousands of telegrams asking for prohibition of cow slaughter. Someone had undertaken a fast on the issue. Commenting upon it Gandhiji said that just as Muslim law could not, in equity, be imposed upon non-Muslims in an Islamic State, Hindu law could not be imposed upon non-Hindus even in a Hindu State, much less in a secular State like the Indian Union. Hinduism prohibited cow slaughter, but this was only for Hindus, not for the whole world. Their nationalism was on trial. Was it only a profession or a reality? he asked. Would they live up to their ideal or would they descend to the practice of what they condemned in Pakistan and thereby admit that Pakistan was right?[14]

Then there were bickerings over the national language. Some were insisting that it must be Hindi and Hindi written only in Devanagri script. Gandhiji said he could never agree to such a proposition. India was as much the motherland of Muslims as of Hindus. The *lingua franca* of India, therefore, could only be an amalgam of simple Hindi and simple Urdu, in other words Hindustani and it should be both in Devanagri and Urdu scripts. India was the home of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and others. The Parsis were driven out of Persia and found shelter in India. Here they were treated as equals. That was India's tradition. She did not scorn the newcomers. She just absorbed them. He would, therefore, said Gandhiji, stand by Hindustani even if he had to stand alone. The Muslims might regard themselves as the enemies of the Hindus. India had to win them over. This she could do only through friendship, non-violence, love. It must be the non-violence of the brave. He could never teach anyone to be cowardly.

Gandhiji was rebuked for wasting his breath in "championing forlorn causes". Why could he not now retire? —he was asked. Or, if he insisted in remaining in harness, why should he not use his popularity for handling "popular causes"? He replied that it was a vicious suggestion that in the evening of one's life one should lend one's weight only to popular causes. Popular causes needed no further

weight, and often popular causes — like popular superstitions — had to be resisted with all one's might. Causes that were intrinsically just could never be described as forlorn. Far from being a vain labour, his advocacy of Hindustani written in two scripts showed that he had the wisdom not to subscribe to the two-nation theory which Pakistan was supposed to enunciate. It was for every Indian worthy of his or her salt to resist the mad wave that was sweeping across the land.[15]

Jinnah was reported to have congratulated the Muslims of non-Pakistan areas for their labours and sacrifices that had helped to make Pakistan a reality. Some members of the Muslim League were reported openly to be saying that they would not be content with the truncated Pakistan that had been secured. Their eyes, it was said were on Delhi, Agra, Ajmer and Aligarh — the seats of Muslim culture. Some even dreamt of dominating the whole of India. Already the popular Muslim League slogan *Larke lenge Pakistan* (we will take Pakistan by fighting) had been enlarged into *Hanske liya hai Pakistan, Larke lenge Hindustan* (we got Pakistan in fun; we will take Hindustan by force). This naturally aroused the fear and apprehension of the non-Muslims. What guarantee was there, people asked, that the Muslims in the Union would not act as fifth columnists and traitors and secretly work for the realisation of Pakistan's dream? Was it right on the part of the Congress Governments to take the risk of trusting them? Since Pakistan was to be an Islamic State, why should not the Indian Union declare itself to be a Hindu State? Here were seeds of a development which endangered the very ideal of the secular State. Gandhiji said that no matter what happened, the Congress Government could not discriminate against anyone on ground of religion. "My eldest son has often come to me saying, 'I will be good in future, I will not touch wine.' I tell him, 'Though I do not trust you, I shall give you a chance.' He has not been able to keep his word so far. Yet, if he comes again, I will not turn him out, and I shall hope that he will be as good as his word, until I know that he has come back only to deceive me. We must trust the Muslims in the same way and at the same time be vigilant."[16]

"But if we have suspicion in our minds, will it not be reflected in our deeds?" a friend asked.

"No," said Gandhiji. "You must not act on suspicion. Look at the British. How much harm they have done to India! I confess that I am not yet wholly free from suspicion. I wonder, if they can really change completely, but I trust Lord Mountbatten. The world cannot go on without trust. If the minorities prove unworthy, the State can take necessary action. But you must not prejudge them."[17]

"We must, however, be prepared to fight the danger," persisted another friend.

"Yes," said Gandhiji. "The real preparation lies in purging ourselves of our inherent weaknesses — selfishness and disunity."[18]

* * *

When in the course of doing one's duty one gets it on the neck from both sides, it is as sure an indication as is possible in this uncertain world that one is, humanly speaking, about right. Nearly ninety-five per cent. of the post received by Gandhiji was filled with abuse. Hindus accused him of being partial towards the Muslims. The Muslims, on the other hand, looked upon him as their arch-enemy, because of his opposition to partition. An anonymous letter threatened Manu with assassination if she continued to recite the verses from the Koran at the prayer meetings.

"Does not your non-violence stink in your nostrils?" "Are you not ashamed of the non-violence of the past thirty years which has resulted in the violence that has been stalking the land?" angry critics asked.

"No," replied Gandhiji. The fragrance of non-violence was never sweeter to him than in the midst of the stink of violence of the most cowardly type that he found all around. Of course, he had every reason to be ashamed, as he had already admitted, of the aftermath of over thirty years of non-violence so-called. Had it been the non-violence of the strong, the practice of a generation would have made the orgy of destruction of life and property that they had witnessed impossible.[19]

Even his advice to the Hindus to be just towards the Indian Muslims irrespective of what they in Pakistan did was regarded as a sign of his partiality towards the Muslims. In refutation of the accusation, Gandhiji said that the law was no respecter of persons. Everybody would be judged according to his deeds. But for the occasion his remarks were addressed to the Hindus. For being in the majority, it was they who by their action were to prove or disprove the two-nation theory.

His speeches about undoing partition by ridding partition of its evil were similarly interpreted by some to mean that he was hankering after geographical reunion. It was a vain hope, he was told. He should try, instead, to bring about cooperation and collaboration between the two States. Gandhiji replied that he was not guilty of entertaining the hope ascribed to him. Though the signs were all against it he did not rule out a reunion based upon an appreciation of mutual interest. There was none who did not desire mutual cooperation. But he was doing more: he was pleading for correct behaviour on the part of the majority community irrespective of what the other side did or did not.

Jinnah in one of his statements had called Hindus "our enemies". Adverting to that remark Gandhiji said that his friend, as he still regarded Jinnah, had thereby rendered distinct disservice to Islam.

But it was open to the Hindus not to wear the cap thrust upon them and belie Jinnah's characterisation by proving themselves friends of every Indian. Pakistan was there; he reminded Jinnah. Why should Jinnah not be happy now that he had got it? Or had the poison gone too deep? "Let those who have eyes see the thing and avoid it well before India is caught in the poisonous coil."

3

"Freedom has come but it leaves me cold," wrote Gandhiji in a letter to Asaf Ali, the Indian Ambassador to the United States, in the third week of July. "So far as I can see, I am a back number. I have come to the conclusion that our way was non-violent only superficially, our hearts were violent. It was enough to displace the foreign power. But the violence nursed within has broken out in a way least expected. Heaven knows where it will lead us."

Almost every letter written by him at this time reflected the deep inner travail into which the events that were taking place around him had plunged him. "Where is Swaraj?" he wrote to another co-worker. "The British are going. But what is there in it to get excited about?"

"I almost despair of seeing peace in my lifetime," he said in another letter. To one of his daughters-in-law he wrote: "What is going on in the country in connection with the transfer of power and Pakistan is putting a heavy strain on me. I have, therefore, lost confidence in my capacity to live for long."

His frequent references to lack of desire on his part, in the existing circumstance, to live long drew a remonstrance from an American friend, Richard Gregg, the well-known interpreter of his philosophy and the author of that classic *The Power of Non-violence*. He read in Gandhiji's utterances despondency and loss of hope. In a letter he entreated him to reconsider his attitude. There was far more at stake than present violence in India "even if this (state of affairs) should continue for fifteen years."

Replying in *Harijan* Gandhiji said that the statement that he found no place for himself in a society that based itself on violence had nothing to do with the reported loss of hope; he did not want to harbour the idea of hopelessness. At the same time, he reaffirmed his belief that there could be no place for a man of peace in a society full of strife. "Yet he may . . . hope by ceaseless striving to make a place for himself. That is exactly the meaning of my statement. . . . I am *in* that society, though not *of* it. The statement registers my protest. . . . We may not tell God that if violence (the folly of men) does not stop within a certain time that fits our hopes, we will stop doing our utmost including living as long as we can."[20]

His reply did not wholly satisfy an English Quaker leader and friend of India, Carl Heath. It seemed to him that Gandhiji's statement was tantamount to a declaration of loss of faith, which was worse even than loss of hope. He remonstrated with Gandhiji: "The number of years that you live in this world . . . is not of supreme importance to the multitude of your friends, but it is of supreme importance that you maintain your radiant hope. For hope in the man of faith is the same thing as the belief in God. He hopes, not because of any confidence in the working out of human purposes but because of his deep faith in God and the purpose of the Eternal. . . . What I believe has happened . . . to you, dear friend, is a heart sickness due to the pain of communal violence in India and that severance of your country the Muslim League has compelled us all to accept. But all the planning of men are *in time*. The will of the *Eternal Good* prevails at the end —for *God* reigns."[21]

Alluding to Gandhiji's statement that "there can be no place for a man of peace in a society full of strife," Carl Heath wrote: "Surely, right in the centre of 'a society full of strife' is precisely and exactly where God puts the apostolic man; not as a superior man apart, but as what the Hebrew prophet so wonderfully called the Suffering Servant, *in* and *of* and suffering *with* that society, that his suffering may bring redemption to that society. You, my honoured friend, are one of those apostolic men, and all through history such men have had to face despair, but they have never surrendered to it. Nor will you. Least of all will you despair in respect of India, which is now going through the birth-pangs of a new life. You will always make your protest at wrong done by men to men. You always have. But God reigns, and *your hope is an eternal thing*, and your faith is such that we know you cannot lose that hope."

"I wholly agree with you," Gandhiji replied to Carl Heath, "that the number of years a person lives in this world is of no consequence whether to him or to the world but even a day spent in true service of mankind is of supreme and only importance." He further conceded that hope and faith were as often as not synonymous terms. "Of course God is eternal, evil transitory."[22]

That however, did not affect the core of his argument. He continued: "I must abide by my statement. . . . I am sure, you will agree with me that a man of peace is out of place in a society full of strife. He must know this fact and yet work and act in that society. . . . There is no such thing as surrender in me to the spirit of evil."

Several Indian friends, too, had written to Gandhiji in the same vein. Gandhiji's reply to them all was that his was not an attitude of despair. His anguish did not betoken a desire to run away from evil. It only gave a measure of the intensity of his determination to grapple with it and do or die in the effort. In a letter to an old Ashram

colleague he wrote that there was only one thing that was at the root of what might be called his "despondency, anguish or despair":

> How to evolve true non-violence out of the violence that has passed for and we have practised in the name of non-violence so far? How to lead the people back to true non-violence after thirty years of wrong practice? That is my problem. I am searching within me for an answer. It is this travail that fills me. You may call it by whatever name you like.
>
> I agree that by waking up to our mistakes and taking proper steps, the wrong past can be expunged. But who listens? And why should anyone listen? Whichever way one looks, there is a stone wall. It has to be pierced. Therefore, do not from a distance make too much of my distress. I am in good cheer.[23]

What is the relation between equanimity and vicarious suffering? Can the two co-exist? Can a man of equanimity experience anguish? Gandhiji's reply is "Yes" and "No". "If I was a perfect man," he once wrote, "I own, I should not feel the miseries of neighbours as I do. As a perfect man I should take note of them, prescribe a remedy, and compel adoption by the force of unchallengeable Truth in me. But as yet I only see as through a glass darkly and therefore have to carry conviction by slow and laborious processes, and then, too, not always with success. . . . I would be less than human if, with all my knowledge of avoidable misery pervading the land. . . . I did not feel with and for all the suffering of the dumb millions of India."[24]

And again:

> My soul refuses to be satisfied so long as it is a helpless witness of a single wrong or a single misery. But it is not possible for me, a weak, frail, miserable being, to mend every wrong or to hold myself free of blame for all the wrong I see. The spirit in me pulls one way, the flesh in me pulls in the opposite direction. There *is* freedom from the action of these two forces but that freedom is attainable only by slow and painful stages. I cannot attain freedom by a mechanical refusal to act, but only by intelligent action in a detached manner. This struggle resolves itself into an incessant crucifixion of the flesh so that the spirit may become entirely free.[25]

In other words, while perfection is above all sorrow and suffering, the way to it lies through sorrow and suffering. Further, attainment of equanimity does not mean absence of the visitations of sorrow and suffering but the capacity to remain unaffected by them. The meaning changes, the sting goes, the experience becomes a consummation and a fulfilment.

". . . to bear all naked truths,
And envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty."

As Gandhiji's search proceeded, it led him to probe deeper and deeper. Could he be labouring under a delusion? Could the very ideal of the universal application of Ahimsa be wrong? What was his duty in regard to his Congress colleagues? These cogitations found expression in another letter to the same Ashram colleague:

"You know the gravamen of the criticism against me: the law of non-violence is for the individual only and that too for the enlightened one or the recluse. Therefore, my experiment in universal application of non-violence can never be successful. While I was in the Yeravda Central Prison in 1922, Anglican Bishops addressed me a letter. It was to the effect that even the Sermon on the Mount was intended for the twelve disciples of Jesus only. That is how Christian pontiffs like our *shastris* (theologians) try to explain away the non-violence of Jesus. I remember Hathibhai Shastri telling me at Juhu that non-violence was only to be regarded as an ideal (not realisable in this world). He loved me but regarded me as a deluded fool. . . .

"The difficulty in discovering techniques for the universal application of Ahimsa is that experiments can be made only when an occasion for them arises (and such occasions are naturally rare). Success calls for a clear conception of the full ideal of Ahimsa on the part of the researcher or the pioneer. But if the ideal (of universal Ahimsa) itself be rooted in a delusion, then what Shiva said in respect of Parvati will apply to me. I shall be able to see my delusion only when it passes away. Delusion is a reality while it lasts. Is not our entire phenomenal universe an illusion? And yet who can cancel it? My heart-churning . . . continues: Should one part company with one's colleagues? If so, when? That is my problem."[26]

"I go so far as to say," he had affirmed on a previous occasion, "that if Ahimsa cannot be practised by the millions, I have no use for it for myself." How to make that consummation a reality for India's millions was his problem.

* * *

The Congress President, Acharya Kripalani in his concluding speech at the All-India Congress Committee in June had said that Gandhiji had not been able to show the way of combating communal strife by non-violence as he had done in the case of fighting the British. Gandhiji had himself admitted, the Congress President went on to say, that he was groping in the dark and though he had said that he was solving the Hindu-Muslim problem for the whole of India by his work in Noakhali and Bihar, he (the Congress President) had

not been able to understand how the technique could be applied on a mass scale. That was why he was not standing alongside Gandhiji that day and had agreed to the partition of India.

Gandhiji's reply to this was that his "groping in the dark" had reference to the fact that he did not know how to make the people see his point of view. He never had any doubt that non-violence was as effective a weapon against communal strife as it had proved in their struggle against the British. The people had followed him then, because they knew they could not face the might of the British arms in any other way. Theirs was the non-violence of the weak. To counteract communal madness non-violence of the brave was needed.

> There was a time when people listened to me because I showed them how to give fight to the British without arms when they had no arms and the British Government was fully equipped and organised for an armed fight. But today I am told that my non-violence can be of no avail against the communal madness and, therefore, people should arm themselves for self-defence. If this is true, it has to be admitted that our thirty years of non-violent practice was an utter waste of time. We should have from the beginning trained ourselves in the use of arms.
>
> But I do not agree that our thirty years' probation in non-violence has been utterly wasted. It was due to our non-violence, defective though it was, that we were able to bear up under the heaviest repression and the message of independence penetrated every nook and corner of India. But as our non-violence was the non-violence of the weak, the leaven did not spread. Had we adopted non-violence as the weapon of the strong, because we realised that it was more effective than any other weapon, in fact the mightiest force in the world, we would have made use of its full potency and not have discarded it as soon as the fight against the British was over or we were in a position to wield conventional weapons. But as I have already said, we adopted it out of our helplessness. If we had the atom bomb, we would have used it against the British.[27]

Some people had begun to say that non-violence had a limited potency and a limited objective—that it could not be employed in the new situation that had arisen. Gandhiji told them that, though they were not aware of it, the law of non-violence was in operation in their midst even at that moment.

> Today I am told that it (the law of love) has ceased to be effective. Now I ask you, what brings you daily to these prayer meetings? There is no compulsion. Still you come drawn by love and patiently listen to what I say. If all Hindus listened

> to me, we could set an example which the world would be forced to follow.
>
> You will ask why I do not tell this to the Muslims. My reply is that they today regard me as their enemy. The Hindus do not regard me as their enemy. That is why I tell them to throw their weapons into the sea and realise the matchless potency of the non-violence of the brave.[28]

But even while he was addressing them those words, he was asking within himself: Was he a fit vehicle for the communication of that truth? Successfully to bring it home to the people he had to have full realisation of it himself:

> Have I that non-violence of the brave in me? My death alone will show that. If someone killed me and I died with prayer for the assassin on my lips, and God's remembrance and consciousness of His living presence in the sanctuary of my heart, then alone would I be said to have had the non-violence of the brave. If Hindus — nay even if the Sikhs alone — developed that capacity and that courage, they would solve the problem of India.
>
> But today even Badshah Khan, the brave and valiant Pathan that he is, lacks it in full measure. He is afraid that if anybody said to the Pathans that the Frontier Province should join the Indian Union, it would lead to a fratricidal conflict among them on an unprecedented scale. What can he do? Non-violence of the brave is not a thing that can be manufactured to order.[29]

His admission that he did not know how to make the people take to the non-violence of the brave, said Gandhiji, however did not mean that he did not know how that virtue was to be cultivated. "Consciousness of the living presence of God within oneself is undoubtedly the first requisite." He had prescribed daily recitation of God's name as a means for evoking that presence within. But the daily recitation carried with it certain implications. "Assuming that the millions of India daily recite at a given time the name of God as Rama, Allah, Khuda, Ahur Mazda and Jehovah, but the reciters are not free from drunkenness, debauchery, gambling on the market or in the gambling dens, black-marketing etc, Ramadhun would be a vain and inglorious effort. One with a wicked heart can never be conscious of the all-purifying presence of God."[30] It was, therefore, truer (if it was a fact) to say that India was not ready for the lesson of Ahimsa of the strong than that no programme had been devised for the teaching. In other words, the programme for the cultivation of the Ahimsa of the strong was not so attractive as that of fighting the British had proved to be.

To a young Socialist friend he wrote: "The only strength we had

was moral and spiritual. That we have lost. The opposite of it is brute or military force. That also we have not. This will spell India's ruin. You will now understand why I have laid so much emphasis on banning tea, cigarettes and such other articles of addiction. A word to the wise."[31]

The science of Satyagraha does not consist merely of the enunciation of the law. It includes the devising of methods by which the masses can be taught to practise it to solve their daily problems. Step by step Gandhiji was being led towards the formulation of a new dynamic which, by capturing the people's imagination, would fire them with the same enthusiasm for the non-violence of his conception as his non-cooperation and civil disobedience programme had in the fight against the British. For that the programme would have to answer a deep, universal longing in their hearts and provide a panacea for the ills under which they laboured but which they did not know how to remove. That programme came later. He had just time to indicate it in broad outline and to make a beginning. Then the Supreme Sacrifice came which made death proud to take him.

CHAPTER XV

A JIGSAW PUZZLE

1

GANDHIJI WAS sick at heart. He did not like the way his Congress colleagues were going. At the same time he did not want openly to criticise them lest he should embarrass them. In the last week of July, he wrote to Sardar Patel: "I do not like much of what is going on here. That does not mean that you should alter your course, but I do not want it to be said that I was associated with it. Moreover, I ought to reach Bihar and from there Noakhali before the 15th (August). That, too, is important work. All that I ask of you, therefore, is that you should not detain me here. . . . I also feel that *Harijan* should now be closed. It does not seem to me to be right to give contrary guidance to the country. Think over it at your leisure."

To the manager of *Harijan*, he wrote: "Perhaps we may have to decide to close *Harijan*. . . . My mind rebels against many things that our leaders are doing. Yet I do not feel like actively opposing them. But how can I avoid it if I am running a paper? You do not want to run it without me, nor does the Sardar."

But the Congress leaders needed his presence in Delhi. And so he continued to be in the capital trying, to the best of his ability, to lighten their burden.

The question of his relations with his colleagues in the Government was one of extreme delicacy. So long as he was in the capital, he could not shut his eyes to the goings-on there. But he had no position official or other in the Congress organisation, much less in the Government. He had to take care lest even the exercise of moral authority should, in the circumstances, create in them a feeling of oppression. The administrative approach to problems differs from a purely moral approach. An administrator has to take public opinion along with him; he cannot go far ahead of it if totalitarian methods are to be avoided. A reformer can afford to go ahead and take risks which a responsible administrator cannot. Gandhiji's Congress colleagues were now members of the Government. They were practical people who had been set aglow by his idealism. They valued his guidance because they had found it to be the most practical. But seeing that they had now to act under their own steam, he had to

take the greatest care that his guidance did not savour of interference, or become oppressive. He had faith in their integrity and patriotism. They were actuated by the purest of motives. They had no axe to grind. He, therefore, let them put into practice what they had assimilated of his teachings. In the meantime he set about to change the environment and by his work among the people create urges which would make it easy for them to approximate their policies to his ideals.

* * *

The Khaksars of whom mention was made in Vol. I, Chapter XXVIII, had evidently profited little by their Bihar experience. Their demand was "an undivided Pakistan stretching from Karachi to Calcutta." They were angry because Jinnah had accepted a "truncated, motheaten" Pakistan. On the 10th June, while the Council of the Muslim League was holding its session in New Delhi to ratify the acceptance of the Partition-cum-Pakistan plan, they attempted a lightning *coup*. Armed with *belchas* (sharpened spades) they rushed through the lounge of the Imperial Hotel shouting "Get Jinnah". They were overpowered by the use of tear gas bombs but only after they had wrought an incredible amount of havoc on the furniture. Soon after, they got into trouble with the Delhi authorities and had to be suitably dealt with. Though in the past they had abused and had even exploited Gandhiji's goodness and were even now impenitent, two of them again came to him with what was afterwards found to be a faked story. Gandhiji was moved by their tale.

Gandhiji to Sardar Patel 26th July, 1947

> One of them (the Khaksars) wept bitterly. He said that the officials had told them that in any case they would have to go, therefore, nothing further would happen. In spite of it, that very night Muslims in the mosque were fired upon. Many were killed. An old man of seventy received seven bullets. It is not known how many of the casualties died and how many survived. The mosque was surrounded. For three days the Khaksars had to suffer the torture of hunger and thirst. They could not even go out to attend to nature's needs.
>
> I was staggered to hear all this. I rebuked him: "All that is impossible. The Sardar has only today told me that it was when the Khaksars refused to vacate the mosque under any circumstances and the Muslim elders themselves suggested it that police officials emptied the premises after obtaining the permission of the Imam. No force was used. Only tear gas was used and no-one was killed. I cannot therefore swallow what you say." Their reply was: "We know our statements can count for nothing when your Sardar tells you something different. Well, the Khaksars are dead

and gone, what is the use of asking for justice now? But one day you will know. Truth will not remain hidden." I said: "If I discover that wrong has been done, I will not shelter even my dearest one. There is nothing more I can say to you now. But you can depend upon me to do my duty." Now, if there is anything in it, please let me know.

The Khaksars met him again a few days later at Lahore. Gandhiji thereupon sent another letter to the Sardar: "They (the Khaksars complain of further injustice. They had come to see me (they said) leaving their luggage in the hotel. During their absence, their luggage was taken away from the hotel by the police. I told them I could only write to you. I could do nothing more. They said, 'Nobody is going to give us a hearing. Give us a note therefore so that we might get a patient hearing. We do not care what happens afterwards.' . . . I do not want you to give your time to them. It would be enough if you ask some official to give them a hearing."[1]

Gandhiji had a soft corner for all. He trusted everybody. That sometimes encouraged people to take undue advantage of him. The Sardar was differently made. Shrewd son of the soil, the ex-lawyer who had made a name for himself in the conduct of criminal cases, he was given wide berth by all old hands and even by magistrates notorious for brow-beating. He knew his clients and they him. He stood no nonsense from anybody and nobody dared to play pranks on him. His reply was as categorical as a reply could be.

Sardar Patel to Gandhiji 11th August, 1947

The Khaksars are bothering you for nothing. In your letter . . . from Delhi you mentioned about (alleged) firing and the resulting casualties in a Delhi mosque. The whole story about firing is a fabrication and no Khaksar has died of bullet wounds. A number of Khaksars had established themselves in the mosque and were plotting to stage a demonstration during the celebration of independence day (15th August). Their plan was not to allow the Congress flag to be flown and to create a disturbance and indulge in violence. The Commissioner (a Muslim) therefore used tear gas in the mosque and arrested them. Nothing besides this has happened. Some Khaksars have come with your letter today. Their complaint also is utterly baseless. I have sent them to the Commissioner. The Khaksars want Delhi and Agra to be included in Pakistan, also Ajmer. To that end they want to establish a front in Delhi and create disturbance. These people do not want to allow the Commissioner to remain in Delhi. They take sanctuary in mosques. Local Muslims are not giving them any support.

Gandhiji wrote back: "I understand about the Khaksars. I felt I owed it to them so to act that they should realise that they had not even a plausible ground for grievance. . . . That is how I have always acted."[2]

Three months later Gandhiji for all his pains received the following from the leader of the Khaksars: "In your so-called prayer meetings which you so hypocritically begin with Koran and Gita there is not a single utterance of yours about political matters not streaked with bitterness, perversion of truth or revenge against the Musalmans . . . and it is doubly clear now . . . that you are the enemy . . . of the entire ten crore Muslims of India. My two months' personal investigation of the State killings of Bihar conclusively proved that these were planned under your immediate and sole direction."[3]

* * *

The Sardar was worried about the failure of the monsoons in Gujarat, and the problem of the States. "For the last fifteen days I have been occupied with the Princes. It is so taxing. There seems to be no end to the Nawab of Bhopal's intrigues. He is working day and night to cause a split among the Princes and to keep them out of the Indian Union. The Princes are weak beyond measure. They are full of selfishness, falsehood and hypocrisy."[4] Gandhiji was, if anything, even more worried about the Sardar's health. He had recommended his favourite nature-cure. It did not seem to have worked. On the 13th August he wrote to the Sardar: "We are faced with difficulty and difficulties seem to be increasing. On top of it the elements seem to have turned against us. What shall we do if the rains fail? Is death (through starvation) to be the inevitable lot of many? The problem of the States is difficult. But I know you will successfully tackle it. Who will, however, tackle the problem of your health?"

* * *

The selection of Lord Mountbatten by the Indian leaders as the first Governor-General of the Indian Union was a unique event in the history of Indo-British relations. The essentially non-violent character of the struggle alone made this possible. In any other circumstances such a thing would have been inconceivable. But some people objected: Mountbatten was an Englishman. Could not an equally suitable Indian be found for the post?

Gandhiji defended his colleagues' action. It showed that they could rise above all prejudice and were brave enough to trust their erstwhile opponents. Mountbatten was staying on not as Viceroy but their first servant. As part — if not sole — author of the conception behind the Dominion Status formula, he was especially fitted to pilot the ship of the State safe through the troubled waters. His power as the

constitutional head of the State would be attenuated. That he should nevertheless continue to serve showed the mettle of the man.

In the sequel this appointment proved to be an act of far-seeing statesmanship. The British conservatives had "always believed in Pakistan as a British ally against the dangerous Hindus on one side and malevolent Bolsheviks on the other."[5] The Union Government's decision to retain Lord Mountbatten as the Governor-General made it difficult for Pakistan to pass off its "anti-Hindu" sentiments as "pro-British" concern.

It was not easy, however, to pluck from the people's memory the "rooted arrow" of past British wrongs. Gandhiji had to keep a very vigilant eye on it. For instance, a rumour had been set afloat that the Union Jack would figure in the fly of the Union flag, as it did in the Canadian and some other Dominion flags. A correspondent wrote to Gandhiji that if that happened, he would "tear the flag to pieces". Gandhiji insisted that they must show chivalry and respect where chivalry and respect are due, and knightly courtesy to all. The Union Jack had committed no crime. The wrong done to India during the long years of subjection had been caused by the British Government. They were now going. They would lose nothing by being generous towards their erstwhile opponents and let the Union Jack occupy a corner in their flag, so long as India remained in the Commonwealth. Personally he felt they should make it a point of honour.[6]

The rumour proved to be ill-founded; the Union Jack was not to occupy a place on the Indian flag. But the moral of it remained. Gandhiji asked the people not to rejoice over the omission. The British Government having recognised their independence, it was open to the Indian Union to do as they liked. He was only solicitous about the Indian tradition.

* * *

In South India, largely as a result of the chronic Brahmin-non-Brahmin feud, a movement had sprung up for setting up Dravidistan — a separate State comprising the entire population speaking the four Dravidian languages — Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannad. Gandhiji had favoured the reorganisation of the Provinces on linguistic lines as he wished to encourage the growth of the regional languages and to insure the fullest cultural autonomy to each unit. But he did not want it to develop into a movement for disruption and disintegration. He openly expressed his disapproval of the Dravidistan movement. Would they like it to be said of them, he asked, that they were fit for one political system only under bondage, and as free men they would split up like slaves into separate groups, each group going its own way? Or, would they be held in bondage by one despotic

State possessing an army large enough to bring them under subjection? India free would be able to cohere and function as one only if it accepted moral Government. Congress as a fighting machine against bondage was held together by moral force. Should it be different now that they had almost attained political freedom?[7]

* * *

Typifying the revolt in the Congress against the non-violent tradition and earlier ideals of the non-cooperation era was the controversy over the design of the Flag of the Indian Union. It was Gandhiji who had given to the Congress the tricolour. The spinning-wheel blazoned in the middle symbolised non-violence, dignity of labour and the ideal of "Unto This Last". In the flag that was adopted, Asoka's Dharma Chakra or the "wheel of the law" replaced the spinning-wheel. An ex-Congress Minister had allowed himself to say in the course of a speech that the Asoka Chakra had nothing in common with the spinning-wheel, it was a symbol of Hinduism. The spinning-wheel symbolised non-violence. The new one was the Sudarshan Chakra, a sure sign of violence. Disapproving the change, Gandhiji wrote in *Harijan*:

> Some say that the original has vanished for ever. A new generation has begun and with it have come new and befitting conceptions. I have not yet known a worthy son for whom age has disfigured his mother. It is conceivably possible to gild pure gold, but the son is yet to be born who would embellish his parent. Hence, in my opinion, nothing would have been lost if our councillors had never thought of interfering with the design of the original flag.[8]

He continued: "In defence of the improvement some say that the spinning-wheel was an old woman's solace and Gandhi's toy; but Swaraj does not belong to old women. It belongs to the warriors, and, therefore, we want Asoka's disc mounted with lions. . . . We have had enough of cowardliness. . . . Only the lion is the undisputed king of forest life. Sheep and goats are his food. We are tired of Khadi in this age of advance. We have beautiful cloth made of (spun) glass. Our forefathers used cloth as a protection against wind and rain. Now we use cloth as ornamentation; therefore, it should be so transparent as to show to advantage every limb of the body. . . . We do not want to disfigure with Khadi the shop windows of our towns. Surely, it should be counted as creditable for us when we do not regard it criminal for the villagers to wear Khadi and for old women to ply the wheel in their humble cottages. I would refuse to salute the flag that bears the foregoing interpretation, however artistic it may appear."

Pandit Nehru, however, explained in the Constituent Assembly, that, in implication, the new flag was the same as the existing tricolour. It also was to be of Khadi like the old. Commenting upon it, Gandhiji wrote:

> The wheel on the improved pattern bereft of the spindle and the *mal* need not be counted as a defect if it was purely due to the exigencies of art. After all every picture has to leave something for the imagination. . . . Some will recall through the wheel the name of that Prince of Peace, Asoka, the founder of an empire, who ultimately gave up the pomp and circumstance of power to become the undisputed Emperor of the hearts of men and became the representative of all the known faiths. We would call it a legitimate interpretation of the wheel to seek in it the Wheel of Law ascribed to that living store of mercy and love. The spinning-wheel thus interpreted adds to its importance in the life of billions of mankind. To liken it to and to derive it from the Asoka disc is to recognise in the insignificant-looking Charkha the necessity of obeying the ever-moving Wheel of the Divine Law of Love.[9]

* * *

It was brought to his notice that the people were not buying the Charkha flags since the Constituent Assembly had adopted the new national flag. Nearly two hundred thousand rupees worth of these were, in consequence, lying unsold with the All-India Spinners' Association. In one of his prayer addresses he drew attention to this. The Spinners' Association was a poor man's organisation. It could ill afford to bear that loss. The Association's Khadi shops should, therefore, refuse to sell new flags till the old stock was exhausted. The people could and should fly the old flag without any hesitation or hindrance. "When the King died, it was said, 'King is dead, long live the King.' The kingship continued. The coins had the impression of the successor king. The old coins, however, bore the same value and were as current as the new ones. The same held true about the existing tricolour."[10]

The tree-planting week, which the Government had organised as a soil conservation measure, engaged his attention. Many important personages had taken part in it, including the Governor-General's lady. But she alone had watered the trees afterwards. Gandhiji commended to the people her thoroughness and care. If independence was to become a reality for the masses, he felt, all people big and small would have to realise more and more the value of little things. There was a danger that after independence they might let their minds be engrossed with "big" things to the neglect of the "small". The destiny of India's seven hundred thousand villages hung more on little things done well

or ill by her four hundred million sons and daughters than upon things, however big, which a few might do. Would the leaders of independent India, who might be in charge of the Government, hold power solely on behalf of the masses and use it for their sake only, or would the new Government yield to the temptation of filling its exchequer by taxing the poor man's salt or exploiting the people's degradation by raising revenue from drink for instance, as the British Government had done and for which he had applied to it the epithet "Satanic"? That was the test, he said, by which Indian independence would be judged. If the Government of the Union of India lost its head and did that it would be a sad and shameful thing.

* * *

The objective of the Congress so far had been defined as attainment of independence through "legitimate and peaceful" means which Gandhiji had paraphrased as "truthful and non-violent" means. Should the Congress continue after independence and, if so, what would be its function? Gandhiji said he had no doubt in his mind that it had to continue even after the attainment of independence, though its objective must change. As he looked around him in their hearts there was neither truth nor non-violence. Both Hindus and Muslims were preparing for further slaughter. If such a conflict came, it would be worse than the rising of 1857, for in 1857 the masses of India were not awake. That was why he had said he could not participate in the celebrations of the 15th August whilst they were getting ready for a bloody war among themselves. "God forbid that such a calamity should befall India. If it did, our freedom would be short-lived. Russia, America and Britain and perhaps others also would soon step in and put an end to the newly acquired political freedom."[11]

Some argued that the Muslims having asked for and got their Pakistan, the Congress should turn itself into a Hindu organisation. Gandhiji said, Congress could never do that for the simple reason that the Muslims of the Indian Union had never declared themselves as aliens.[12]

He refused to accept the view that since India had been divided, she could not play in the world the role of a great nation. By throwing in her moral weight on the side of right and justice, India could still make a contribution to world peace worthy of her tradition. Dr. Sjharir, for instance, had come to India to seek Pandit Nehru's help in Indonesia's freedom struggle against Dutch colonialism. India's moral support could be of far more consequence than any legions that she could send out. But for that they had to set their own house in order first. They could not wield any moral influence if they continued to be at war with one another.

* * *

"What should be the non-Muslim's attitude towards the Pakistan flag?" he was asked. His answer was that if the Pakistan flag was identified with Islam, it ought to be common to all the Muslims of the world and command their universal respect. So far as he knew there was no such flag either for Islam, Christianity or Hinduism or any other faith. "If, on the other hand, the Pakistan flag represents all the inhabitants equally, irrespective of religion, it will command my salute as it should yours." If, on intrinsic merits, the flag was worthy of their salute, the fact that it belonged to Pakistan should make no difference. Could Dominions of the Commonwealth regard themselves enemies one of the other?[13]

* * *

India was on the eve of adopting adult franchise as the basis of her future constitution. Gandhiji was afraid that unless it was well planned, and all possible dangers were anticipated and provided against, adult suffrage could "well prove a deluge drowning the whole country".[14] Largely as a result of his influence, self-sacrifice, unostentatious service, and purity of character had come to be regarded as the criterion of a worker's worth. Slick oratory had gone out of fashion. Unless they took good care, Gandhiji warned, their new-born democracy might be smothered under the weight of inert majorities manipulated by unscrupulous demagogues and Tammany Hall bosses, who had suffered eclipse at the beginning of the non-cooperation era. There was nothing so effective for separating the grain from the chaff as a well-thought out constructive programme. But the constructive programme had been steadily losing its popularity with Congressmen. Gandhiji was emphatic that if the Congress was to live as a potent force "it must become an association of constructive workers."[15] He dealt with the question more fully in December, 1947. For the time being the most important question that occupied him at Delhi was the jigsaw puzzle of the Indian States.

2

It is difficult at this distance of time for people to have an idea of the seriousness of the problem which the problem of the States posed to the Indian leaders on the eve of the transfer of power. Proposed abrogation under the Indian Independence Act of all treaties and sufferances, whereby suzerainty had in the past been exercised over the States by the British, threatened to give rise to a situation which could well render nugatory Indian independence.

A highly significant observation was made by Lester Hutchinson during the House of Commons debate on the Independence Bill.

"The problem of the Princes," he observed, "is one which hits the whole basis of the scheme, and one which has to be looked at very seriously, because, if we are going to enter into any particular treaty commitments which force us to be used as instruments of princely despotism, then the whole basis of the Indian independence plan will fail from the very outset."

Characterising the Indian States, politically speaking, as a "remarkable example of the survival of the unfittest, which could not have existed without the might of the paramount power behind them," Hutchinson went on: "If the strength of the paramount power is going to be withdrawn, can it be expected that the people in those States are going to tolerate their feudal conditions, side by side with the progress of modern India? If they rise against their Princes, what is going to be the function of Britain in her separate treaties with the States? Are we to be expected to repress such rising?"

Not less downright was Woodrow Wyatt. Observed he in the course of the same debate, that the worst thing the British had done in India was to take away from the people of the States the ultimate sanction of revolt and rebellion: "By our guarantee to the rulers of the States, that provided they did not annoy us, or interfere in our broad policies, we would protect them, we have prevented the people from having that sanction."

Harold Macmillan, who led for the opposition, challenged this statement. "Does he mean to say," he asked, "that the whole power of the Political Department and authority of the Government of India has not been consistently used to secure that any ruler who was maladministering his State . . . should not either be warned or finally removed?"

Woodrow Wyatt rejoined: "I most emphatically say that it has been the policy of the Political Department of the Government of India not to remove the ruler of any State unless his policies conflicted with the policies of British India, or his behaviour was in some way socially scandalous or flagrantly improper. It has never been because of failure to provide for democratic government in the State." He was sure that during the last two years, they should have done more to "strip" the rulers of their powers and "force" them to associate more directly with the rest of India.

The princely order was an outmoded anachronism in the democratic India that was being born. In the natural course, it would have been swept away like so much wreckage before the tide of history as had happened elsewhere. It was the crowning glory of India's non-violent freedom struggle that by the application of Gandhiji's doctrine of trusteeship, it provided a solution of their problem, too, by affording them an opportunity to transform themselves instead of being liquidated. A number of them later played important roles in

Independent India and India got the benefit of their talent which she could not have otherwise.

Under the Cabinet Mission Plan, the future relation of the States with the Indian Union was left to be decided by negotiations between the Princes and the Constituent Assembly, and a Negotiating Committee under the Constituent Assembly had been set up for that purpose. A section of the princely order headed by the Nawab of Bhopal, the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, however, had kept out in the hope of securing better terms for themselves. This section took advantage of the Objectives Resolution of the Constituent Assembly, which declared that the future constitution of India would be framed on the basis that the Union would be an "independent sovereign Republic", as a bogy to create a scare in the princely ranks. Eight days after the passing of that resolution, on the 29th January, 1947, the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes resolved that every State shall continue to retain its sovereignty and all rights and powers other than those that have been expressly delegated by it. "There can be no question of any power being vested or inherent or implied in the Union in respect of the States unless specially agreed to by them."

The more thoughtful among the rulers, however, realised that they had no future in isolated independence; their fate was indissolubly linked with the rest of India. They resented the chaperonship of Bhopal. His stand, that "no action affecting their representation in the Constituent Assembly could be taken by them individually but only collectively and in agreement with the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes" was regarded by them as adumbrating in effect a "new doctrine of Paramountcy" in the place of the British that was coming to an end. They revolted against him and by the last week of March, 1947, when Lord Mountbatten arrived in India 10 out of the 16 bigger States had sent their representatives to the Constituent Assembly.

With the prospect of the division of India into two parts—one predominantly Hindu and the other predominantly Muslim—some of the more ambitious rulers felt they had another opportunity to make a bid for a continuation of their despotism. They declared that they would not accede to either of the two parts based upon "a communal division", as they always had resisted within their territories the development of the communal spirit. This was patently untrue. To maintain their despotic rule a number of them had deliberately encouraged communalism in their territories. They now sought admission into the British Commonwealth as separate independent units.

On the 11th June, 1947, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Diwan of Travancore, announced the decision of the Travancore State to declare itself independent on the 15th August. Next day the Nizam of Hyderabad followed suit with a *firman* declaring that with the lapse

of Paramountcy in pursuance of His Majesty's Government's plan, Hyderabad would become independent. This was a ridiculous claim. Both the States had always been vassal States; the first of the Sultan of Mysore, from whose "clutches" it was rescued when it entered into the "subsidiary system", the other of the Moghuls; and both ultimately of the British. A powerful popular movement—under the States Peoples Congress—for securing democratic constitutional rights for the States people, had been in existence in the Travancore State. The people were in favour of accession to India. But the Diwan banned the holding of public meetings by the States Peoples Congress.

Evidently, commented Gandhiji, Sir C. P. was quite content for Travancore to remain in India so long as the British King was Emperor, but the moment the power passed into Indian hands, he wanted Travancore not to join in the Union of India! It was a wholly untenable position. If the British were going to be party to such conduct, it would be to their lasting shame. He hoped they would act on the square.

And what applied to Travancore applied equally to Hyderabad. Times had changed and if the Princes did not take the occasion by the forelock, they would cease to be. Congress had no desire to annihilate them, he proceeded, but the Princes had to recognise the signs of the times. They would only compass their own undoing if they set themselves up against the tide of history. The only straight course before them was to come into the Constituent Assembly, he personally did not mind which. India, to everybody's deep sorrow, was being partitioned because of Hindu-Muslim quarrels. He hoped the Princes would not attempt to create further separatism. A heavy duty rested on Lord Mountbatten, too. As Britain's last Viceroy he must not leave the country in needless strife.[16]

Speaking in the All-India Congress Committee meeting on the following day he repeated the warning:

> It is amazing that the Princes who were virtual slaves of the British should spurn an honourable position in the Union of India and should want to be independent. The Union are not inimical to the Princes. But today they have jealously to guard the welfare of the whole of India. The people of the States are with us. If the Princes become independent it can only be at the cost of freedom of the people of the States. So far as I know India, such a thing will never be tolerated. The Princes must read the writing on the wall.

Whether Princes liked it or not independence was coming, he further warned. They were free to declare their independence and "enjoy it in Paris, London or wherever they pleased." But in free India they

could continue only as the servants and trustees of their people, not as lords and masters. "If they accept the logic of that position, they must recognise the Paramountcy of the Indian people as they had accepted the Paramountcy of the British power. Nobody will then be able to touch them—neither the Congress nor anybody else. With due deference to the Diwans of various States, let me say that if they do not advise the Princes to come into the Constituent Assembly—I do not mind which one they join—they will be disloyal to their rulers and unfaithful to their trust.[17]

Sir C. P. returned to the charge. Gandhiji and the Congress were willing to agree to an independent Pathanistan for the Frontier Province; how then could they object to an independent Travancore?

The analogy, replied Gandhiji, did not hold. The Pathans did not seek to be independent. They only wanted the freedom to frame their own constitution after the full face of Pakistan and the Indian Union was exposed to view. They would then decide which State to join. They did not want to be a third State but only autonomous like any of the other Provinces, owning allegiance to the Centre but having no interference in their internal affairs. If Badshah Khan meant anything different, he (Gandhiji) for one would have no hesitation in breaking with him, an old friend though he was. What Sir C.P. however, wanted was a State independent of both the Dominions. If this were allowed and the example was followed by others, the consequence of it would be that India would be split up into several States. These petty States would need an emperor and the emperor who was now leaving might even return with redoubled force. That would be a disaster too dreadful to contemplate. The analogy between Travancore and the Frontier Province was again misleading in that Sir C. P. spoke for the Maharaja, the Frontier leaders spoke for the *Jirga*—the people. One was unadulterated autocracy, the other full democracy.[18]

* * *

After the announcement of the partition plan, Lord Mountbatten announced that no Indian State could enter the British Commonwealth separately as a Dominion. If any Indian States came to him for having a separate treaty, economic or military, with His Majesty's Government, he would "transmit such a request to the proper quarters."[19]

This had a very salutary effect on the Princes. Gandhiji had always maintained that the States problem was purely a myth created by the British to perpetuate their hold on India and would vanish when the British decided that they no longer wanted it. But this used to be resented as an unwarranted aspersion on British integrity unworthy of the Mahatma by the British people even when they were otherwise sympathetic towards the Indian aspirations—such was the universality

the myth had acquired as a result of persistent propaganda. History completely vindicated Gandhiji. The very day Lord Mountbatten made the aforementioned announcement, the Nawab of Bhopal resigned from the Chancellorship of the Chamber of Princes and the Maharaja of Patiala was elected in his place. Under his lead the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes adopted the resolution that the Chamber had "lost its usefulness and should cease to exist".

Following with a lynx-eyed vigilance every move that was being made in one of his letters to Mountbatten Gandhiji wrote: "The more I see things the more firmly I believe that the States problem presents a variety of difficulties which demand very serious and fearless treatment on your part." [20a] Four days later, on the 15th June, the All-India Congress Committee resolved that the Congress could not admit the right of any State in India to declare its independence. Thereupon Jinnah in a statement declared that the States had every right to declare their sovereign status:

> Constitutionally and legally, the Indian States will be independent sovereign States on the termination of Paramountcy and they will be free to decide for themselves to adopt any course they like; it is open to them to join the Hindustan Constituent Assembly or the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, or decide to remain independent. In the last case they can enter into such agreements or relationship with Hindustan or Pakistan as they may choose.[21]

Partly owing to its composition, in which remnants of the old feudal order figured largely, the Muslim League had no compunction about aligning itself with the claims of the rulers, however unrealistic. In this it had the full backing and support of the British imperialists. Intransmissibility of Paramountcy held out an opportunity for doing some slick horse-dealing with the Indian Union. A section of the Conservatives extended their support to a Confederation plan which would give to some of the States, without any sea-board, access to the sea. This would open up the possibility of their acceding to Pakistan by overcoming the factor of "geographical compulsion" which would have otherwise determined their choice. And since Pakistan, it was taken for granted, would choose to remain in the Commonwealth, this in its turn would have a "sobering" effect on the Indian Union. In an article that appeared in the London *Spectator* in the last week of June, 1947, these secret designs and machinations of the British imperialists were inadvertently brought to light by Sir William Barton, advertised as "a well-known writer on Indian affairs":

> Too much insistence has been placed on the isolation of States from sea-board. Kathiawar, Baroda, Rajputana and the Sikh States and most of the Gujarat States should be served by

the Kathiawar ports and so would not be dependent economically on Hindustan. This being so, if agreement with Congress were impossible, a group might, if the Congress decided on independence, join Pakistan. Geographically there would be no difficulty about such an agreement; or they might claim Dominion Status. Could His Majesty's Government refuse?

With unity, the States would be able to obtain reasonable terms especially now that partition has weakened the position of the Congress. The League will almost certainly stay in the Commonwealth, an added inducement to Rajputana States and Kashmir to conclude agreement with it. The Congress may, in such conditions decide to follow the League's move. By doing so it would inspire confidence in the States generally; it would give them what they desire—a guarantee against external aggression. The Confederation of the States, particularly the smaller ones, would, if successful, revolutionise the situation. . . .

Thanks to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's masterly handling, in spite of the antagonistic attitude of some of the important rulers, by 26th June, it was reported, that no less than 40 States, besides representatives of 400 "residuary group States", representing 44 millions out of the 93 millions belonging to the whole body of States, would attend the forthcoming session of the Constituent Assembly that was to be held on the 14th July.

On the 25th July, after the passing of the Independence Act, Lord Mountbatten, at a conference of the Princes, declared that after the 15th August, 1947, legally and technically they would be independent. But they must not forget, he warned them, that on the lapse of Paramountcy they would lose the protection which their treaties with Britain gave them. He, therefore, advised them before that time to make up their minds and accede to one or the other Dominion—bearing in mind their geographical position and the compulsion of that position.

This was a welcome advance on the previous British declarations on the subject. But Gandhiji's observant eye detected a very significant lacuna in the Viceroy's utterance. It was filled with talk about the Princes. There was no reference in it to the people of the States. In his prayer address of the 27th July he observed that the British had occasionally hauled a Prince over the coals for misgovernance, but by and large they had allowed the Princes to live lives of ease and luxury and to exploit their subjects. Now that the Imperial Power was going and the weight of Paramountcy was to be withdrawn, the Princes might foolishly resent the Paramountcy of the people. If they were wise, they would regard the people's Paramountcy as a privilege to be prized and try to become truly the first servants of the people.

They should act on the advice of the States Peoples Conference, which was the voice of the people. They were on their trial. The States people comprised probably one-fourth of the whole of India. Would the ten crores of States subjects be able to rejoice on the 15th of August?

The fact that the British power, though it no longer encouraged, had never generally repudiated the right claimed by the Indian Princes to have independent treaty arrangements with Britain, again and again roused Gandhiji's suspicion as to the ultimate British intentions — a suspicion well grounded in past experience and declarations of British policy made by those in high authority with a cynical frankness that takes one's breath away.[22] Gandhiji felt that as a loyal and faithful friend, he owed it to Lord Mountbatten not to withhold his suspicion from him, while fully trusting to his judgment and skill to tackle the problem in the way he thought best.

The British could have declared, he remarked in his prayer address on the 27th July, that Paramountcy would devolve on the Dominions. They might have adjudicated as to which Dominion each State was to join. This unfortunately they did not choose to do. Nevertheless the Princes' road was clear. They should choose the right course forthwith and assist in making the whole of India, though in two parts, a true democracy. There should be no mental reservations. All parties must lay all their cards on the table.

* * *

In the last week of July, the Maharaja of Travancore decided to accede to the Indian Union. Soon after, there was a murderous attack on the life of his Diwan by some exasperated subject of his State. As soon as Gandhiji realised the grave nature of the attack, he wrote to Sir C. P. : "You will forgive me for this belated solicitude. I was perplexed about your attitude on Travancore. . . . When I heard about the attack on you I regarded it as of no consequence. . . . I am amazed at my unbelief. Pardon me for it."[23]

Shortly afterwards, Sir. C. P. finally resigned from the Diwanship declaring that he was retiring from politics "altogether to devote myself entirely to literary and philosophic studies and writings." In a letter to Gandhiji he wrote: "You will probably have noticed that I have resigned my position as Diwan, though the resignation was not due to the attack but to the fact that the work for which I resumed the Diwanship 'after once resigning' had been completed after the negotiations with Mountbatten." Many an eye-brow was raised at the doughty Travancore Diwan's explanation.

The Princely pagoda tree was rotten-ripe for shaking. On the Independence Day — the 15th August — Mountbatten was in a position to declare that as a result of the India Government's

negotiations with the Princes, "nearly all" the States had signed an "Instrument of Accession" which V. P. Menon, Secretary of the States Department under Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, had devised. The instrument left the constitutional independence of the States untouched save in respect of three subjects — defence, external affairs, and communications — which they surrendered to the Union Government.

That left Hyderabad, Junagadh and Kashmir. A "standstill" agreement for one year was negotiated with Hyderabad in November, 1947, the same being made permanent before the end of the year. Junagadh was successfully tackled some time later. But Kashmir became a bone of contention between India and Pakistan and a running sore in the body politic of both.

3

"The more I think over it, the more I feel that as soon as the matter of Kashmir is settled, I should leave Delhi," wrote Gandhiji in his letter of 24th July to Sardar Patel. The question of Pandit Nehru's visit to Kashmir had been claiming Gandhiji's attention all through the month of July. Behind it stretched a long story.

The State of Jammu and Kashmir inhabited by 78 per cent. Muslims and ruled by a Hindu ruler was Hyderabad State in the reverse. It was the biggest of the Indian States, covering an area of 84,471 square miles and was ranked as the third richest State in India. It was famed for its beauty and natural wealth and was strategically situated on the border both of China and Russia. It had, therefore, international significance. The State was sold in 1846 by the East India Company to one of the ancestors of the ruling Maharaja in lieu of 75 lakhs of rupees under what is known as the "Treaty of Amritsar".

In common with most of the Indian Princes, Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir was opposed to the setting up of a democratic government and had spared no pains to suppress the nationalist movement in his State. The Kashmir National Conference — a nationalist organisation under Sheikh Abdullah — had a natural ally in the Indian National Congress. Either organisation was wedded to the ideal of democracy and of the secular State without reference to class, caste or religion. During the Cabinet Mission's visit to India in 1946, and even before, a movement had been going on in the State under the Kashmir National Conference for constitutional changes to bring the administration of the State in line with the democratic set up in British India. As a result, almost all the leaders of the National Conference had been jailed. It was in this context that in June, 1946, during the negotiations with the Cabinet Mission, Pandit Nehru

had decided to go to Kashmir in order to arrange for Sheikh Abdullah's defence. The Maharaja's attitude was most insulting.

Maharaja Hari Singh to Victor Rosenthal 1st June, 1946

> At the time of his arrest Abdullah was apparently on his way to see his Guru Jawaharlal and so Jawaharlal's personal vanity was greatly injured by the fact that his lieutenant was arrested, when on his way to take sanctuary with him. Being what he is, Jawaharlal has completely gone off the deep end.
>
> In any case, we are prepared for anything he may say or do — and we think he knows it — in fact in the end he may feel that discretion is the better part of valour and shut up. Anyway, we will fight and fight to an end. This is a test case for all the States.

History was soon to show who had actually "gone off the deep end."

At Kohala, on the border of Kashmir State, an order was served on Pandit Nehru. He was peremptorily asked to leave Kashmir territory and, on his refusal, he was arrested. But both the Cabinet Mission and the Congress Working Committee needed him in Delhi. Negotiations could not proceed in his absence. The Congress President sent him an urgent message to return at once. Pandit Nehru's first impulse was to take the bit in his mouth: "In view of the grave discourtesy offered to me by the Kashmir Government in spite of my friendly approaches, I deeply regret I am wholly unable to return until full liberty of movement, including a visit to Srinagar, is accorded to me. I request the Working Committee to proceed without me."[24]

Gandhiji drafted for the Congress President the following reply to be sent to Pandit Nehru:

> I and all are of opinion that your presence here is essential above everything else. Remember that you are under an organisation which you have adorned so long. Its needs must be paramount for you and me. Remember also that your honour is ours and your obedience to the Congress call automatically transfers to it the duty of guarding your honour. The Committee is also solicitous equally with you about Sheikh Abdullah's case and the welfare of the Kashmir people. Therefore, I expect you to return in answer to this. You will tell Maharaja Saheb that as soon as you are freed by the Congress, you will return to Kashmir to retrieve your honour and fulfil your mission.

This left Pandit Nehru no option but to return. This he did though not without an inner struggle. As a disciplined soldier of the Congress

Pandit Nehru, Gandhiji announced at his prayer gathering on the 22nd June, 1946, had decided to return from Kashmir immediately in obedience to the Congress President's instructions. He ended with the words: "His honour is the honour of the Congress." Sheikh Abdullah's trial, too, had been postponed in the meantime. Before returning to Delhi Pandit Nehru wrote to the Maharaja:

> In view of the directions of the Congress Working Committee . . . I have decided to return immediately to Delhi. . . . I have done so, however, on the distinct understanding that I shall return to Kashmir as soon as the urgent work in Delhi permits me to do so. . . . As soon as the date of my return to Kashmir is fixed I shall inform you of it. I do not know how your Government will view my return and whether it will again attempt to stop it or not. If any such order is passed with a view to stopping me, I shall be unable to obey it. I see no justification whatever for any Government, least of all the Kashmir Government at present, to try to stop the entry of an individual like me, and I cannot submit to any such restriction on my freedom of movement.

After several adjournments, Sheikh Abdullah's trial was fixed for the 24th July, 1946. Pandit Nehru, therefore, informed the Viceroy and the Maharaja as also the Nawab of Bhopal, who was trying to act as an intermediary between the Congress and the Maharaja, of his intention to renew his visit to Kashmir. The Viceroy wrote back to say that the ban on his visit had been removed by the Kashmir Government (presumably as a result of the Viceroy's intervention) and that he could go to Kashmir if he wished to. The Maharaja's reply was laced with the following gratuitous advice: "I suggest that while in the State, you should confine yourself to work relating to the defence of Mr. Abdullah. For your information I would add that orders are in force . . . banning demonstrations, meetings and gatherings of more than five persons, for the time being."[25] Pandit Nehru had no intention of defying these orders. He confined himself strictly to the work in hand while in the Vale and the visit passed without any untoward incident.

But it was going to be no smooth sailing for the Congress leaders. A letter which the Maharaja wrote about this time to one H. S. Sharma of Delhi, showed that he had no scruples about playing with Hindu communalism just as he had none in regard to the Muslim League to safeguard his position against the rising tide of popular awakening: "Since you wrote, Mr. Nehru has come and gone. I am grateful to you for your offer to send volunteers to assist us in case a situation arose when such assistance will be necessary. Happily such a situation

has not arisen and we hope it will not arise even in future, but should it arise I will keep your offer in view."[26]

After his visit to Kashmir, Pandit Nehru submitted a report to the Congress Working Committee on the situation in the State. The Working Committee after considering the report adopted, in the second week of August, 1946, a resolution asking Sardar Patel and Maulana Azad to take up the matter where Pandit Nehru had left it. By yet another resolution, some time later, it reiterated its stand on the question of Kashmir:

> The Working Committee feel it necessary to send a deputation, consisting of persons of unquestioned ability and impartiality, to inquire into the reports of repression, suppression of civil liberties and tampering with voters. The Committee, therefore, earnestly recommend to the Kashmir State that they should invite such a deputation. Recent events in Kashmir have a larger significance affecting the rulers and peoples of all the States in India and the Committee trust that the States will welcome the step that they are taking in regard to Kashmir.[27]

But although the Maharaja's Government was prepared to allow the Sardar, in his personal capacity, to see things for himself and study the situation, it was opposed to any deputation or Commission coming from outside the State for investigation. Pandit Ramchandra Kak, the Prime Minister of Kashmir, in a letter dated 13th October, 1946, to Sardar Patel wrote: "I am confident that a man of your wisdom and experience will appreciate our difficulty when I say that where matters of policy are concerned, it is impossible to concede the principle that one authority shall determine the policy, when a different authority is to face the consequences of its enforcement."

Gandhiji was in the meantime trying to utilise the good offices of the Nawab of Bhopal to resolve the deadlock. Professor K. T. Shah, the eminent economist, who was also a friend and Financial Adviser to the Nawab, acting as the Nawab's emissary, met Gandhiji on the 16th October. In the course of the meeting Gandhiji warned that the feeling against the Kashmir authorities' policy was so strong that "if resistance was inopportune and was pressed too far, the Kashmir *gadi* itself might go." On Professor Shah's seeking further clarification on "the possible loss of the *gadi* to the present Maharaja" or "annexation of the State as a whole on the analogy of Malhar Rao of Baroda 70 years ago", Gandhiji affirmed that he meant "not merely the possible loss of the throne to the present Maharaja but even the disappearance of the State as a unit." Gandhiji further suggested that it would be but "right, proper and wise" for the

Maharaja, not only to promise to place no obstacle in the way of such a Commission and its inquiry, "but to aid it in every way possible to get at facts, and arrive at a correct understanding of the situation." The Congress was as much of the Indian people in the States, said Gandhiji, as of the Princes. It would, therefore, be "wholly wrong to stigmatise Congress interest as interference in the domestic affairs of any State." The Congress was not an outsider.[28]

In giving this warning, Gandhiji had done no more than point out, as a friend, a consequence which was inevitable if Princely India tried Canute-wise to mop back the waves. But his advice only disturbed the Nawab of Bhopal, like a physician's wholesome warning against wrong living to a spoiled patient. In a letter to his secretary, the Nawab wrote:

> Shah gave me his message yesterday and I cannot tell you how distressed and worried I am. . . . I was hopeful of an amicable and happy solution, feeling, as I have always done, that Gandhiji will always be fair and just to the States. His attitude earlier in the year, as reported to me, was most heartening, and this encouraged me in the belief that the States will get a fair deal and that the dispute about Kashmir would be amicably and satisfactorily settled. The change in the attitude of the Congress makes me really alarmed. . . .
>
> The States are sovereign and autonomous. They wish to retain their sovereignty and autonomy. They belong to India and they are prepared to come into a union for specific purposes, but not on terms savouring of Paramountcy of the British type. . . . Given autonomy and sovereignty we will stand for the honour and independence of India. . . . Any aggression from any quarters we will resist. . . .
>
> The contemplated action in Kashmir cuts at the very root of the existence of States. If such an action is not permissible in the case of Nepal and Afghanistan, why is it permissible in the case of Kashmir? Will this be the fate of the States in India of the future? I ask myself the question. . . .
>
> Should some serious situation arise in a State resulting in bloodshed and chaos as a result of Government action or any other causes and circumstances should be such as to call for an impartial inquiry, I have no doubt that the States themselves would hold an inquiry. Let there be such an inquiry by all means. . . . But if the principle is conceded that these inquiries can be initiated in any part of British India, and will have the necessary authority in an Indian State, (then) the position would be worse than what it was under British rule. It would kill and destroy all incentive in the States for independence for the time being

> at any rate. . . . Will it be worth while to start such a thing at this juncture?[29]

The "serious situation" postulated by the Nawab in his letter did actually obtain in Kashmir but the ruler was determined not to read the writing on the wall. He continued his headlong rush towards the final catastrophe from which Gandhiji, as a true friend, was trying his utmost to save him.

Political developments thereafter left the Congress High Command little time to pursue the matter further. Violent outbreaks in Noakhali, Bihar, and the Frontier Province, and the Muslim League's intrigues within the Interim Government as well as without kept their hands more than full and there the matter rested for the time.

With Mountbatten's arrival, a new phase of developments began. After the 3rd June plan of partition and transfer of power, the threat of separatism held out by some of the bigger States began to loom large on the horizon. In a letter to the Maharaja, dated the 4th July, 1947, Pandit Nehru tried once more to reason with him:

> It is hardly possible in the course of a brief letter to discuss any matter of importance. . . . I would suggest to you, therefore, that it would be desirable for you to meet my colleagues and me and discuss matters of common interest. . . . I view the question entirely impersonally and I bear no grudge to anyone. Certainly I have no ill-will for you. . . . What I am concerned with is not the past but the future and I want to consider this future in terms of friendly cooperation with you and with others concerned. . . . As far as possible, we want to go ahead with the cooperation of others.
>
> I do not think it is possible for any Indian State to be completely independent. In the world today such small independent entities have no place, more especially in the frontier regions between two great States. . . . I appreciate your difficulties. I am not unused to facing difficulties myself. The best way to do so is to face them and overcome them, and I would suggest to you that the time has come, indeed it is overdue now, that a definite change in State policy should take place. . . . I trust that you will appreciate what I have written and the advice I have ventured to give you. I am quite sure that it is for the good of Kashmir, for your good, and for the good of India as a whole.

Determined to go his way, the Maharaja, however, refused to be saved.

The leaders of the Kashmir National Conference were anxious for Pandit Nehru to pay them a visit. But as Maharaja Hari Singh still objected to Pandit Nehru's going to Kashmir, Gandhiji wrote to Lord

Mountbatten to ask whether the Maharaja would be agreeable to his (Gandhiji's) or Sardar Patel's going in place of Pandit Nehru. If loss of face was what really mattered there was a way out: "Panditji was with me. . . . I gave him the purport of the conversation about Kashmir. . . . I share his anxiety that the matter brooks no delay. For him it is one of personal honour. I have simply undertaken to replace him to the best of my ability. I would like to free him from anxiety in this matter."[30]

Lord Mountbatten wrote to the Maharaja on the same day advising him to agree to Gandhiji's visit:

> I have had a talk with both Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru, who are both still anxious to visit Kashmir. I pointed out to them that any visit from a big Congress leader in which speeches were made could not fail to cause the League to send speakers of the order of Mr. Jinnah to counter their propaganda. This would in effect produce the electioneering atmosphere which you so rightly wish to avoid, since, as you pointed out to me, there has been no bloodshed up to date and only violent political speeches could now bring about this bloodshed.
>
> Mr. Gandhi tells me that Pandit Nehru is prepared to forego his visit if he (Mr. Gandhi) goes instead. I am therefore writing this at Mr. Gandhi's request (and dictating it in his presence) to suggest that you should agree to his visit in the near future and make things as easy as possible for him. He has given me his firm assurance that he will make no political speeches or carry on any form of propaganda. . . .

But even this "firm" assurance on Gandhiji's part and Lord Mountbatten's persuasion could not reconcile the Maharaja to the proposed visit.

Maharaja Hari Singh to Lord Mountbatten 8th July, 1947

> I would say that it would be advisable from all points of view for Mahatma Gandhi to cancel his projected visit to Kashmir this year. If, however, for reasons of his own he is not in a position to do so, I should still say that his visit should take place only towards the end of the autumn. . . . I would, however, again strongly advise that he or any other political leader should not visit the State until the conditions in India take a happier turn.

This letter was not received in Delhi till the 11th July. Worried by the absence of any news for a fortnight, Gandhiji again wrote to Lord Mountbatten on the 11th July: "I am still without any news from Kashmir. . . . If I was not bound by any promise made to you, of course I would not want any permission to go to Kashmir. I would simply go as any private person."

Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji 12th July, 1947

Thank you for your letter of the 11th, which by a coincidence arrived the same day as the reply from the Maharaja of Kashmir which I enclose. He reiterates the views he so strongly expressed to me when I was in Kashmir and which I passed on to you: "A tiny spark, in spite of the best intentions in the world, may set alight a conflagration which it would be impossible to control."

As I told you, the Maharaja was strongly opposed to any Muslim League leader coming to Kashmir, and I had asked Mr. Jinnah not to go or send anyone. I understand that you contemplated a visit to Noakhali. Would you like me to return to the charge and urge acceptance of your visit immediately after the Noakhali visit, or do you feel it is urgent that you should go before?

Gandhiji talked the matter over with Pandit Nehru, and conveyed Pandit Nehru's reaction to the Viceroy on the 16th July:

I had a long talk with Panditji about Kashmir. He is firmly of opinion that I should go in any case, not minding if Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah or his deputy goes after my visit. He thinks and I agree that if now my visit is postponed, it will disappoint many persons in Kashmir. That I may not be allowed to see Sheikh Abdullah Saheb should not affect the contemplated visit one way or the other. In the circumstances, I suggest that you should telegraph to the Maharaja Saheb that as my visit would not mean any speeches or public meetings, it should not cause any embarrassment to the State and that I would go to Kashmir at the earliest possible moment.

As I have said to you, my suggestion is subject to your wish not to interfere with Panditji's wishes in the matter. If, for any reason you wish otherwise, I would not go. Finally I should add that if for any reason, I do not go to Kashmir, most probably Panditji would want to go for two or three days, though he would prefer my going.

Mountbatten had in the meantime invited the Princes to Delhi for a discussion on the question of accession. He was loath to take any step which might have the effect of jeopardising the outcome of the forthcoming discussions.

Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji 17th July, 1947

As I told you in our talk, I will entirely agree to anything you want, and offer my services to facilitate your visit. I am accordingly telegraphing to the Resident to pass on your proposal to visit Kashmir as a private person to the Maharaja.

Since seeing you I have received news that the Maharaja is sending his Prime Minister, Kak, to Delhi early next week to join the discussions which I am arranging with the States Department. I feel it would be both courteous and wise if you and Pandit Nehru could have a talk with Pandit Kak before deciding on the precise date and details of your visit, as I personally rather fear that a visit of a man of such world-wide eminence as yourself can never be kept sufficiently private not to have some effect on the rather delicate negotiations which I hope to conduct during that week.

The last thing, however, I wish to do is to interfere in any way, with your liberty of movement; I only want to counsel a few more days' patience.

Gandhiji sent the Viceroy's letter to Pandit Nehru. Pandit Nehru at once wrote back that regard being had to the Viceroy's advice, the visit to Kashmir should be postponed till after Kak's arrival in Delhi.

But now another hitch arose. On the 27th night Pandit Nehru saw Gandhiji and told him that Sardar Patel was opposed to his (Gandhiji's) going to Kashmir. That settled the matter for Gandhiji.

Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten 28th July, 1947

It is my silence day. Hence this infliction in the shape of my hand-writing. Pandit Nehru told me last night that as there were hitches about my going to Kashmir, he had decided to go even if only for two or three days. . . . You wanted me to see you before leaving. If the need is still felt, I am at your disposal tomorrow. You will then name the hour.

To Sardar Patel he wrote: "Jawaharlal told me last night that you can approve of his going to Kashmir but not mine. He has, therefore, released me from the promise to go there. I, therefore, now propose to leave for Lahore . . . tomorrow. 30th Lahore and Amritsar. From there, after a day, I take the train for Patna. If this is all right, let me have a line in approval so that I may make my arrangements accordingly."

In the meantime Pandit Nehru also had written to Lord Mountbatten informing him that he proposed to go to Kashmir about the 4th August for 4 or 5 days. "I have not mentioned your name in this connection," he added in his note to Gandhiji informing him of this. It had instantaneous effect.

Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji 28th July, 1947

Pandit Kak told me he had given you his reasons why the Kashmir Government were so very anxious not to have the visit

> from a political leader. . . . He told me after seeing you that although he feared even a visit from you might provoke violence, the fact that you were known to preach non-violence would reduce the risk in your case to less than half the risk if Pandit Nehru came.
>
> The last thing he asked me to tell you was that if you felt it was essential that either you or Pandit Nehru should go, then he would greatly prefer a visit from you, particularly as the papers had already announced your visit and the public were mentally prepared for it. May I therefore urge that you should suggest to Pandit Nehru that your visit at this moment would be better than a visit from him; for I really do not know how the future Prime Minister can be spared from Delhi with only 18 days left for him to take over.

But for once the stream-lined Mountbatten diplomacy misfired! His letter had exactly the opposite effect on Pandit Nehru.

Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji 28th July, 1947

> I have seen the Viceroy's letter. . . . I am a little tired of hearing what Pandit Kak feels or thinks. I am not concerned with it. Indeed, I think that it would be normally right to do the opposite of what he advises. For many months—ever since Mountbatten came—this question of your going or mine has been discussed and postponed. I have had enough of this business. This is not my way of doing anything. I hardly remember anything that has exasperated me quite so much as this affair. . . . I shall go ahead with my plans. As between visiting Kashmir when my people need me there and being Prime Minister, I prefer the former.

The situation had by now become thoroughly scrambled. Gandhiji scribbled a note to the Sardar: "I have already written to you that I am not going to Kashmir, but Jawaharlal will instead. Just now I have a letter from the Viceroy saying that I should go but not Jawaharlal. I feel absolutely at sea. What should I do?"

The note was delivered to the Sardar by his daughter while he was attending a committee meeting. He wrote back: "I need time to think. Therefore you can't leave tomorrow. We shall think it over tomorrow and then decide."

The only effect of these last minute developments was to postpone Gandhiji's departure for Kashmir from 29th to the 30th July.

* * *

The rainy season was on with passing sunshine and shower, clouds marched and counter-marched upon the surrounding green

hills, when Gandhiji and party reached Srinagar on the afternoon of 1st August. In the evening he was taken out for a drive. The State was celebrating with lights the restoration to Kashmir of Gilgit which had hitherto been administered by the Governor-General through the Political Department. "What are these illuminations for?" Gandhiji asked. On being told the reason, he remarked: "A great mistake. They should have taken this opportunity immediately to proclaim autonomy for Gilgit within Kashmir." Almost hundred per cent. Muslim in its population, Gilgit had thoroughly been saturated with the separatist tradition sedulously fostered under the Political Department's regime. In a flash Gandhiji saw the seeds of future trouble in an unqualified inclusion of Gilgit in Kashmir.

During a two-day stay at Srinagar, Gandhiji saw the Prime Minister and the Maharaja and had a series of interviews with the National Conference workers. On the evening of 3rd August, after a dusty, sweltering drive through the crowded bazar, he paid a visit to Begum Abdullah at her residence, where a domestic function had been arranged in his honour. "The Begum was all sweetness. But there was unnecessary fuss about photography and a highly expensive tea for which obviously great preparation was made. I had come close to the family and hence I administered a gentle rebuke for the lavish expenditure and so much unnecessary trouble. I don't know whether the lesson went home; I fear (it did) not."[31]

A gathering of nearly 5,000 Kashmiri women had been waiting since 11 o'clock in the morning for Gandhiji. They insisted upon his *darshan*. This necessitated another difficult drive at 8 o'clock in the evening. "Thus closed a heavy day with the prospect of a drive to Jammu the next morning (Monday) in silence with halts in between."[32]

At 5 o'clock next morning the return journey began. A dense crowd surrounded the meeting place at Jammu in the evening. Gandhiji was suffering from a bad cold. But he refused to go to the meeting in a car: "When the crush is too great safety always lies in walking." By walking to the meeting he was able to reach the dais "with the minimum of difficulty".

"India will be free on the 15th of August, what of Kashmir?" a deputation of workers asked him at Jammu. "That will depend on the people of Kashmir," Gandhiji replied. They all wanted to know whether Kashmir would join the Union or Pakistan. "That again," answered Gandhiji, "should be decided by the will of the Kashmiris."

It had rained incessantly during the night. Gandhiji's cold in consequence had grown worse. Nevertheless, the next morning after the morning prayer at half past three, he resumed the journey to Rawalpindi stopping briefly at the Wah refugee camp on the way. There were about 9,000 refugees from Rawalpindi and the surrounding area in the camp on the day of his visit. Many of the women

refugees had lost their husbands, near relations, children, house, property—everything. There were orphaned children, left with nobody on earth. What words of consolation could he give them? Silent communion at prayer made them forget their sorrow for the time. At the refugee hospital, that he visited, bullets were being removed from women's breasts. Some had lost their limbs. Others carried in their arms newborn babes hardly 24 hours old. Still some others bore dagger wounds on their bodies. The wounds of the surgical patients stank. Lovingly placing his hand on the heads of the afflicted ones he bade them to make God their sole refuge; nothing else could avail anything in the face of such a calamity. He whisked away the flies from the face of one, pulled the coverlet over the fevered limbs of another. His whole frame shook with anguish. With a deep sigh he muttered: "What bestiality! What barbarism! How can man sink so low?"

A batch of Kasturba Trust girls had been rendering yeoman's service to the refugees at Wah camp. After a brief visit to their centre, Gandhiji motored to Panja Saheb, the famous Sikh shrine. The Gurdwara had twice been attacked by the Muslim mobs during the recent disturbances. Luckily the attacks had been warded off. The Sikhs were perturbed about the safety of their shrines in West Punjab. They wanted, too, Eastern Punjab to be made into a Sikh State. Gandhiji told them that it was unworthy of them even to entertain such an idea. The Sikhs were rightly famed as a warrior race. With them, of all people, merit alone should be the sole test for holding office—not religion, or caste or clan. As regards their fear about the safety of their shrines, they must not look to any other power outside themselves for protection. "I would like every Sikh to be a defender of his faith. . . . I want you to shed all fear about the future . . . (and) to rely on the plighted word of the Muslim leaders. . . . God is the judge, and the world which is His creation, will judge the Muslim leaders, not according to their pledges and promises, but according to their deeds and those of their followers."

The representatives of the refugees came to see Gandhiji in the evening on his return to Wah camp. They felt nervous about the safety of the camp. It might be attacked any time. Could he not stay with them till the 15th of August, or, in the alternative, arrange for their evacuation before that date? Gandhiji told them that his engagements elsewhere did not permit him to prolong his stay there. But he would leave with them instead, as hostage, Sushila, who was as a daughter to him. If anything untoward happened to them, she would be the first to die. The refugees were overjoyed.

"One must not die before one's death," Gandhiji said to them. "Even if the worst comes to the worst and you die, it will be death at the hands of your Muslim brethren." Surely, Pakistan would not

dare to exterminate or to drive out all the minorities. It was unthinkable.

At Rawalpindi the railway journey commenced. Halting at Lahore *en route* he wrote from Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru's residence to Sardar Patel:

Gandhiji to Sardar Patel 6th August, 1947

> A lot of useful work has been done in the Wah camp. People ought not to be removed from there. You ought to take up this matter with the Pakistan Government. Rawalpindi should again have Hindu-Sikh population. You should see my speeches at Panja Saheb and Wah camp. I have made that suggestion there. . . . I have left Sushila behind in Wah camp. I felt it to be necessary. It cheered up the people. They are in a panic. I see no reason for it.

He also sent a report of his Kashmir visit to Pandit Nehru to be shared with the Sardar:

> No public prayer was held on the day of arrival but I appeared before them twice or thrice and said that I could not make any public speech, not because there was any prohibition but because I had promised to myself that if I was to make my visit devoid of political significance insofar as it was possible, I must not address public meetings. . . . The Prime Minister . . . told me that he had no objection whatsoever to public prayers. . . . Consequently, public prayers were held during the two days following in Srinagar and the third in Jammu.
>
> During the two interviews with the Prime Minister I told him about his unpopularity among the people. . . . He wrote to the Maharaja . . . that on a sign from him he would gladly resign. . . . The Maharaja had sent me a message . . . that the Maharaja and the Maharani were anxious to see me. I met them. . . . The heir-apparent with his leg in plaster was also present. . . . Both admitted that with the lapse of British Paramountcy the true Paramountcy of the people of Kashmir would commence. However much they might wish to join the Union, they would have to make the choice in accordance with the wishes of the people. How they could be determined was not discussed at that interview. . . .
>
> Bakshi (Ghulam Mohammad) was most sanguine that the result of the free vote of the people, whether on the adult franchise or on the existing register, would be in favour of Kashmir joining the Union provided of course that Sheikh Abdullah and his co-prisoners were released, all bans were removed and the present

> Prime Minister was not in power. Probably he echoed the general sentiment. I studied the Amritsar treaty properly called "sale deed". I presume it lapses on the 15th instant. To whom does the State revert? Does it not go to the people?

In a letter to the Sardar he wrote: "He (the Maharaja) wishes to remove Kak. . . . The only question (before him) is how. . . . In my opinion the Kashmir problem can be solved."

CHAPTER XVI

'ONE-MAN BOUNDARY FORCE'

1

A TUMULT raged within Gandhiji during the later part of June and through July while he was in the capital. If after the advent of independence the bottled-up passions burst forth, as they threatened to do, independence might turn to ashes like the proverbial Dead-sea fruit. He could do nothing for it from the Centre. He must be by the side of the people, to whose safety and protection he had pledged his life, in their hour of danger.

Bihar called him. So also did Noakhali. When in the last week of May he left Patna, he had expected to return to Bihar inside of a week. But events had since happened in such quick succession that a generation seemed to be packed into a month. The Punjab also seemed to call him. Storm-clouds were gathering in that key Province. Where lay his duty? He could get no clear guidance from within. So he decided to go by the maxim, "When in doubt stay where you are", and continued, as he put it, to "vegetate" in Delhi till the question of his visit to Kashmir was settled, hoping that by his stay there he would be serving Bihar and Noakhali also.

His restlessness, however, continued to increase. It was put to him that if all was well with the rest of India, it would also be well with Noakhali and Bihar. He could not take that view. He had come to Delhi, he said, at the call of the leaders, but if he were asked what he had achieved there, he would be constrained to say "nothing worthwhile". At one of his prayer meetings, therefore, he asked the congregation to pray that he might soon be enabled to go to Noakhali. They could have no idea, he said, of the mental agony he suffered. How could it be otherwise with the spectre of fratricidal violence stalking the land?[1]

The Delhi authorities were not oblivious of the danger. In the last week of July, the Partition Council, fearful as to the percussion which the Boundary Commission's awards might have on areas affected by them, decided to set up a Boundary Force with a nucleus of "some fifty thousand officers and men, mainly composed of mixed units not yet partitioned and containing a high proportion of British officers" in the Punjab partition areas. This probably was "the largest

military force ever collected in any one area of a country for the maintenance of law and order in peace-time" and "certainly the greatest physical preparation . . . from available resources against danger of unknown dimensions." Even this was regarded as "a considerable gamble on communal harmony prevailing over the rest of the sub-continent."[2]

His place in the circumstances, Gandhiji felt, was not in the capital but with the men of "the tattered battalion which fights till it dies."

"Theirs be the music, the colour, the glory, the gold;
Mine be a handful of ashes, a mouthful of mould.
. . . the maimed . . . the halt and the blind in the rain and the cold—"

By-passing Delhi on his way back from Kashmir, he journeyed straight from Lahore to Patna. Thence he would go to Noakhali via Calcutta. Nobody tried to dissuade him this time. They all realised that the way he felt about partition and the coming 15th August celebrations, he would be out of place in the midst of the official rejoicing at the capital on the Independence Day.

"The real test is soon coming," Gandhiji remarked to some Congress workers who saw him off at Lahore. "You should prepare yourselves for it by all the self-purification you are capable of." He was grieved to learn, he said, that people were running away from the West Punjab and that Lahore was being evacuated by the non-Muslims. "I must say this should not be so. If you think Lahore is dead or dying, do not run away from it but die with what you think is dying in Lahore." They must not be panicky. "When you suffer from fear you die before your death. If the people in the Punjab were all to die, not as cowards but as brave men, I for one would not shed a tear." For himself, he declared, the rest of his life was going to be spent in Pakistan. "May be in East Bengal or West Punjab, or perhaps the Frontier Province."

If fear and panic are infectious, so is courage particularly when it is of the non-violent variety. Gandhiji's utterances in Kashmir and elsewhere had travelled before him and produced a most salutary effect all over the Province. When only a week ago, on his way to Kashmir, he had passed through Amritsar, some youngsters had staged a black-flag demonstration at the railway station with shouts of "Gandhi go back". So ear-splitting was the noise that he had to thrust his fingers into his ears to keep out the noise. Now, as the train pulled in, thousands of people were seen lined up on the platform in front of his compartment in perfect order. They asked for his bag which they said they would send afterwards stuffed with collections for the Harijan fund. They were profuse in their apologies for the unseemly scene on

the previous occasion. "It was an egregious mistake on our part. We did not know. Your four days' visit to our Province has transformed the whole atmosphere. Please forgive us."

Gandhiji: "Forget the past. Remember the saying, 'Our day dawns from the moment we wake up.' Let us all wake up now."

There were big crowds at all the stops on the way. On top of this, it began to rain heavily at night. The roof of Gandhiji's carriage leaked, flooding the compartment. The guard suggested that Gandhiji shift to another compartment.

Gandhiji: "What will happen to this one?"

Guard: "The passengers from the other compartment will occupy it."

Gandhiji: "If it is good enough for them, it should be good enough for me, too. How can I think of making myself comfortable at others' expense!"

Guard: "Is there any service I can render?"

Gandhiji: "Do not harass poor passengers and do not take bribes. That will be the greatest service you can render to me."

There was a heavy programme of interviews at Patna. Gandhiji was there the whole day on the 8th August. At the evening prayer he asked the people to observe the 15th August with prayer, fasting and sacrificial spinning. "The Charkha has made Bihar. Even today Bihar leads in spinning. Heaven forbid that Bihar should reduce to ashes all that it has achieved so far."

From the prayer meeting Gandhiji made straight for the station to resume his journey to Calcutta. At a small wayside halt, the crowd, in its characteristic Bihari enthusiasm, became delirious. There was a rush for *darshan* toward the window, where Gandhiji sat. Gandhiji fearing lest someone might be pushed under the wheels of the train (it had actually happened more than once) tried to beat them off by rapping on the knuckles of a few who were pushing against the windows. But the *darshan*-hungry recipients took the rappings as the acme of benediction with the result that there was a renewed rush at the window for the privilege! The two girls accompanying Gandhiji were at first shocked to see the Mahatma thus engaged in a very un-Mahatmic role but presently taking in the situation began to sing Ramadhun. Seconds later the surging mass stood rooted where it was, and instead of the mad rush and the deafening din, there was only mass chanting of God's name to the rhythmic clapping of thousands of hands.

2

On the 3rd July, following upon Bengal's decision in favour of its own partition, a separate Cabinet for West Bengal was sworn in.

Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, the leader of the West Bengal Assembly Congress party headed it. Under this dual arrangement, the existing Muslim League Cabinet remained in actual administrative charge of the various portfolios for the whole of Bengal till the 15th August, but its decisions thereafter were applicable to East Bengal only. Any decision affecting West Bengal would require the approval of the Cabinet representing West Bengal. Shaheed Suhrawardy still continued to be *de jure* Chief Minister of Bengal. But in the choice of the Chief Minister designate for East Bengal, he was jilted in favour of Khwaja Nazimuddin by the Muslim League Parliamentary party of East Bengal.

Calcutta had never really been peaceful since the Great Calcutta Killing of August, 1946. Bitter memories of the Direct Action Day and what the Hindus had suffered under the Muslim League rule were rankling in the people's breast. Communal frenzy had continued to boil and simmer beneath the surface. Murder, arson and loot, the use of fire-arms and throwing of bombs and acid bulbs became a regular feature of life in the city. Organised life in some parts of the city had almost been paralysed. Areas had become divided into "Hindu" and "Muslim". Hindus could not walk even in broad daylight through Muslim quarters and *vice versa*. On top of this, as a result of the freedom given to Government servants under the partition plan to opt for either Dominion, almost all Muslim officers and police had opted for Pakistan and Hindus had taken their places. The Muslims were feeling panicky.

Soon after his arrival at Sodepur Ashram Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, the Chief Minister of the newly formed Cabinet for West Bengal, had an hour's interview with Gandhiji. That very afternoon Gandhiji met by invitation Sir Fredrick Burrows, the Governor. Mohammad Usman, the Muslim League leader and an ex-Mayor of Calcutta, with another Muslim friend came to Gandhiji in the evening. They complained that since the Muslims in the services had almost all been transferred to East Bengal, the Hindus of West Bengal had begun to think that they could now do whatever they liked "to be even with the Muslims." Gandhiji alone could save the Muslims of Calcutta. Could he not stay in Calcutta for a while "to throw a pot of water", as the saying went, on the fire that was raging in the city?

Gandhiji devoted the whole of his prayer address that evening to the situation in Calcutta. He had been hearing, he observed, tales of woe of the Muslims of Calcutta the whole day. He was not going to hold an inquiry into what had been done under the League Ministry. He was more concerned with what his friend Dr. Ghosh's Ministry was doing. Was it true that the Muslims of Calcutta were living in terror? If so, it was a severe reflection on the Congress Ministry. He could never accept the plea, he said, that all that was happening in

Calcutta was the work of hooligans. "The Government must hold itself responsible also for the acts of the goondas so-called. The hour of test has arrived. You will now have to show in full measure your non-violent courage to the world. I will not be a living witness of India's reversion to slavery, which will be her lot, if the Hindu-Muslim quarrel continues, but my spirit will weep over the tragedy even from beyond the grave. My prayer is that God will spare us that calamity."

The next day, 10th August, Mohammad Usman again came. A large Muslim deputation accompanied him. They entreated Gandhiji to stay on in Calcutta even if it were only for two more days. "We Muslims have as much claim upon you as the Hindus. For you yourself have said you are as much of Muslims as of Hindus."

Gandhiji: "I am willing, but then you will have to guarantee the peace of Noakhali. If I do not go to Noakhali before the 15th on the strength of your guarantee, and things go wrong there my life will become forfeit; you will have to face a fast unto death on my part."

Mohammad Usman and the Muslim friends were taken aback by this. The responsibility was great, the risk heavy. They hesitated but ultimately gave the required guarantee on their and Muslim League's behalf. They promised to despatch wires to the local League leaders in Noakhali, including Mian Ghulam Sarwar (the organiser of the Noakhali riots) and his chief collaborator, Quasim Ali, who had only recently been released from detention. To reinforce the telegrams they undertook to send emissaries to help maintain the peace in Noakhali.

Gandhiji told them that though he was anxious to reach Noakhali as soon as possible, in deference to their wishes he could postpone going from the 11th August to the 13th.

Gandhiji to the Governor 11th August, 1947

> What you could not do a big Muslim deputation was able to do. And so I am here at least till tomorrow. Man is veritably clay in the hands of the great Potter.

Announcing the decision at the prayer meeting in the evening, he remarked that it was unthinkable that under a Government versed in the art of administration, the majority could for one moment be permitted to coerce the minority. He had been told that now that the Congress Ministry was in power, the Hindu police and officers had become partial in the administration of justice, and were doing what the Muslim police and officers were alleged to have done before. He was loath to believe it. "If this wretched spirit of communalism enters the police force, the prospect is bleak indeed."

At this stage the redoubtable Shaheed Suhrawardy entered upon the scene. He was at Karachi. Upon learning that Gandhiji was on

his way to Noakhali, he, without losing any time at Delhi where he was to stay a few days, rushed to Calcutta. On the 11th August, he called upon Gandhiji at Sodepur Ashram. It would be incongruous on his part to leave Calcutta while the city was burning, he told Gandhiji in an hour and a half's talk extending nearly to midnight. He should prolong his stay in the city until real peace was restored. Gandhiji replied that he was willing if Suhrawardy was prepared to work in association with him for restoring peace. But that could be possible only on the basis of cent per cent. sincerity. He suggested that they should both live together under the same roof in the disturbed parts, *unprotected by the police or the military*, together meet the people, argue with them and tell them that now that partition had taken place by mutual agreement, there was no longer any reason why the parties should continue to quarrel. If Shaheed Suhrawardy accepted the offer, he on his part would postpone his going to Noakhali indefinitely and remain in Calcutta as long as it was necessary.

But the proposal was of too serious a nature for an immediate reply. Gandhiji asked him to take his time, sleep over it, consult his aged father as well as his daughter, and then communicate to him his decision.

Shaheed Suhrawardy in August 1947, after his dethronement in the Council of the Muslim League, was a different man from the power-conscious Chief Minister of Bengal, playing for nothing less than the leadership of a "Sovereign United Bengal". Only three months back he had turned down an almost identical offer by Gandhiji as a "mad offer". He took one night and half a day to think it over. The next day Mohammad Usman brought Shaheed's reply accepting without reservation Gandhiji's proposal. Accordingly in the evening prayer meeting, Gandhiji announced that he had decided to prolong his stay in Calcutta indefinitely to see what Shaheed Suhrawardy and he could do by working together to achieve real communal peace in the city. He had been warned, he remarked, that Suhrawardy was not to be relied upon. But had not the same been said about himself also? He would trust as he expected to be trusted. Both he and Suhrawardy would live under the same roof. They would have no secrets from each other. They would together see all visitors. People should have the courage to speak out the truth in every circumstance—even in the presence of those against whom charges had to be preferred. He asked the gathering to bless the mission on which they were embarking.

Gandhiji to Sardar Patel 13th August, 1947

> I have got stuck here and am now going to undertake a grave risk. Suhrawardy and I are going from today to stay together in a Muslim quarter. The future will reveal itself. Keep close watch. I shall continue to write.

The ever vigilant Sardar had been following with a watchful eye the developments in Calcutta. He felt concerned over Gandhiji's decision.

Sardar Patel to Gandhiji 13th August, 1947

> So you have got detained in Calcutta and that too in a quarter which is a veritable shambles and a notorious den of gangsters and hooligans. And in what choice company too! It is a terrible risk. But more than that, will your health stand the strain? I am afraid, it must be terribly filthy there. Keep me posted about yourself.

3

It was Gandhiji's unvarying practice on the eve of all important decisions to intimate them to his close associates, who constituted his wider family, by writing personal letters. The day's post on the 13th August included nearly a dozen such letters, all written in his own hand. The work continued non-stop till half past one. He had sent word to Suhrawardy that he would be starting from Sodepur for his new residence in Beliaghata exactly at half past two in the afternoon and Shaheed should arrive in time to accompany him. As Shaheed did not turn even till two minutes before the scheduled time for departure, Gandhiji with his never-failing punctuality left his room at 2.28 p.m. to board the car that was waiting for him and precisely at half past two, started for Beliaghata according to plan.

"Hydari Mansion", an old abandoned Muslim house in an indescribably filthy locality, had hastily been cleaned up for Gandhiji's residence. It was a ramshackle building open on all sides to the crowds. Before many days all the glass in the windows was smashed. There was only one latrine and it was used indiscriminately by hundreds of people, including the police on duty, the visitors and even the *darshan*-seeking crowd. Owing to the rains there was mud and slush. It stank. To drown the stink, bleaching powder was sprinkled liberally all over the place, which made one's head reel. One room was reserved for Gandhiji. Another had been set apart for his luggage, the members of his party, and the guests. A third served as his office.

An excited crowd of young men stood at the gate as Gandhiji's car arrived. They shouted: "Why have you come here? You did not come when we were in trouble. Now that the Muslims have complained, all this fuss is being made over it. Why did you not go to places from where the Hindus have fled?"

A little while after Suhrawardy's car arrived. The angry crowd surrounded it. The situation threatened to take an ugly turn. Gandhiji

sent some of his men outside to expostulate with the demonstrators and tell them to send in their representatives to meet him. This was done. The rest of the demonstrators thereupon calmed down and allowed Suhrawardy to go in.

The demonstration was still going on when Horace Alexander, who had been asked by Gandhiji to come and stay with him at Beliaghata, arrived. The demonstrators tried to stop him too. An Indian friend accompanying Horace tried to explain the situation. In reply there were even shriller cries of "Gandhi go back". Finally, they both got out of their car and walked into the house. The shouting continued.

Some young men tried to climb in at the window of the room in which Gandhiji was sitting. Members of Gandhiji's party begged them to desist. It was no use. Horace began to shut the windows. This, as he himself afterwards put it, proved to be a "most misguided action". Almost immediately stones were thrown through the glass of the windows and glass was flying in all directions. "We then realised that there were wooden shutters and these we closed, though stones were still thrown against them for a time. A press reporter came up to me and said, 'Are you hurt?' I said, 'No, but there is some glass in my hair!' "[3]

Presently the representatives of the demonstrators were ushered in to meet Gandhiji. One of them began: "Last year when Direct Action was launched on the Hindus on the 16th August, you did not come to our rescue. Now that there has been just a little trouble in the Muslim quarters, you have come running to their succour. We don't want you here."

Gandhiji: "Much water has flown under the bridge since August, 1946. What the Muslims did then was utterly wrong. But what is the use of avenging the year 1946 on 1947? I was on my way to Noakhali where your own kith and kin desired my presence. But I now see that I shall have to serve Noakhali only from here. You must understand that I have come here to serve not only Muslims but Hindus, Muslims and all alike. Those who are indulging in brutalities are bringing disgrace upon themselves and the religion they represent. I am going to put myself under your protection. You are welcome to turn against me and play the opposite role if you so choose. I have nearly reached the end of my life's journey. I have not much farther to go. But let me tell you that if you again go mad, I will not be a living witness to it. I have given the same ultimatum to the Muslims of Noakhali also; I have earned the right. Before there is another outbreak of Muslim madness in Noakhali, they will find me dead. Why cannot you see that by taking this step I have put the burden of the peace of Noakhali on the shoulders of Shaheed Suhrawardy and his friends — including men like Mian Ghulam Sarwar and the rest? This is no small gain."

"We do not want your sermons on Ahimsa. You go away from here. We won't allow the Muslims to live here."

"This means that you do not want my services. If you will co-operate with me and allow me to carry on my work, it will enable the Hindus to return and to live in all the places from where they have been driven out. On the other hand, it will profit you nothing to remember old wrongs and nurse old enmities."

An eighteen year old youngster interposed: "History shows that Hindus and Muslims can never be friends. Anyway, ever since I was born I have seen them only fighting each other."

Gandhiji: "Well, I have seen more of history than anyone of you, and I tell you that I have known Hindu boys who called Muslims 'uncle'. Hindus and Muslims used to participate in each others' festivals and other auspicious occasions. You want to force me to leave this place but you should know that I have never submitted to force. It is contrary to my nature. You can obstruct my work, even kill me. I won't invoke the help of the police. You can prevent me from leaving this house, but what is the use of your dubbing me an enemy of the Hindus? I will not accept the label. To make me quit, you have to convince me that I have made a mistake in coming here."

Thus it went on till eight o'clock. At last Gandhiji said: "I put it to you, young men, how can I, who am a Hindu by birth, a Hindu by creed and a Hindu of Hindus in my way of living, be an 'enemy' of Hindus? Does this not show narrow intolerance on your part?"

His words had a profound effect. Slowly and imperceptibly the opposition began to soften. Still they were not completely converted. One of them said, "Perhaps we should now go." Gandhiji replied, "Yes, you must go. It is already late. Come again in the morning when you have thought things over."

At 9 o'clock the evening prayer was held within doors. Both the girls were very hungry. Gandhiji advised them: "It is better to fast than eat late." Both, nevertheless, ate a hearty meal. At 11 Gandhiji went to bed without any food.

The next day — 14th August — proved to be as hectic as the previous one. The young men came again and in Suhrawardy's presence had a long session with Gandhiji. In the course of the discussion Gandhiji pointed out to them that united action on the part of Suhrawardy and himself in Beliaghata was only the first step. If and when the Hindus of Beliaghata invited their Muslim neighbours to return, they would next move to a predominantly Muslim area, where they would stay till the Hindus were invited to return and so on till each community had invited its neighbours to return to their former houses all over Calcutta.

This time the young men were completely won over. They undertook to do all in their power to win over their friends to work with

Gandhiji for peace and goodwill. Said one of them afterwards to another: "What a spell-binder this old man is! No matter how heavy the odds, he does not know what defeat is!" Some of them later guarded his house as volunteers when armed guards were withdrawn after the 15th August.

The evening prayer was held inside the compound of the Hydari Mansion. It was attended by over ten thousand people. In the course of his prayer address, Gandhiji said: "From tomorrow (15th August) we shall be delivered from the bondage of the British rule. But from midnight today, India will be partitioned too. While, therefore, tomorrow will be a day of rejoicing, it will be a day of sorrow as well. It will throw a heavy burden of responsibility upon us. Let us pray to God that He may give us strength to bear it worthily. Let all those Muslims who were forced to flee return to their homes. If two millions of Hindus and Muslims are at daggers drawn with one another in Calcutta, with what face can I go to Noakhali and plead the cause of the Hindus with the Muslims there? And if the flames of communal strife envelop the whole country, how can our new-born freedom survive?"

"Where is Suhrawardy?" the gathering shouted.

"He is inside the house," Gandhiji answered. "He has with my consent kept himself away from the meeting as he wanted to avoid giving the slightest cause for irritation. But in view of the becoming tolerance which you have shown today, I shall be encouraged to bring him to the meeting from tomorrow onwards."

Realising that Suhrawardy was not at the prayer meeting, some of the young men on the outskirts of the prayer meeting decided that this was the moment to attack him. They went shouting for his blood towards the house and stone throwing began again. Horace, too, was inside, having stayed behind because at the last moment he could not find his shoes, and did not wish to go barefoot through the slime outside. The only other man left in the house, beside these two was a young Hindu police officer armed with a pistol. "The police officer and I shut the shutters; Suhrawardy lay on the ground, quite impassive, muttering sardonic remarks about the young men outside. The young policeman and I sat together and I showed him the book I was reading which was a record of non-violence under the Nazis in Norway; and we talked about non-violence and its power. The siege continued and I wondered when the shutters would break down."[4]

Prayer over, Gandhiji returned to his room and straightaway sat down to work. But outside the uproar continued though the stone throwing stopped when he came in from the prayer ground. After a few minutes he beckoned Manu, got up, went with her to the window and throwing open a shutter began to address the crowd outside. "Rapidly the tumult subsided. There was total silence. He rebuked

them for their attack on Suhrawardy. If they had agreed to work with him (Gandhiji) that meant also working with Suhrawardy. The two were as one."[5]

"Where is Suhrawardy?" the people asked. They said they would not disperse unless he appeared before them in person.

Gandhiji told them that Shaheed was inside engaged in breaking the Ramzan fast. He would appear before them presently.

Someone in the crowd made a caustic remark about Suhrawardy's untrustworthiness. Gandhiji answered: "He will not be able to stick to me if he is not sincere; he will drop off before long."

After a time, when he had got them into a mood to listen to Suhrawardy, he beckoned him (Suhrawardy) to his side and stood there in full view of the crowd, resting one hand tactfully on Shaheed's, the other on Manu's shoulder.

Suhrawardy addressed the gathering: "It is Bengal's great good luck that Mahatmaji is in our midst at this hour. Will Bengal realise its high privilege and stop the fratricide?"

One of the crowd: "Are you not responsible for the Great Calcutta Killing?"

Suhrawardy: "Yes, we all are."

"Will you answer my question, please?"

"Yes, it was *my* responsibility."

This unequivocal, straight and candid confession of his guilt by one who had made arrogance and haughtiness his badge and never known humility, had a profound effect on the crowd. "It was the turning point," Gandhiji afterwards remarked. "It had a cleansing effect. I could sense it."

Just then news began to arrive that a mixed Hindu and Muslim procession estimated to be not less than 5,000 had come out on the streets. In one part of the city, it was reported, some Hindus were trying to put up a national flag for the next morning. The Muslims on the other side of the street called out, "Shall we come and help you, brothers?" Their offer was immediately accepted. Remarked Suhrawardy, "Look at the miracle that Mahatmaji has wrought in a single day."

At 9 o'clock at night, Suhrawardy took Gandhiji to the Lake for a walk. By the time they returned it was already ten.

"We are so late," complained Gandhiji looking at the watch. "My evening walk has cost me dear."

Suhrawardy, who was a night-bird of a most incorrigible type, replied: "Sir, it is only ten."

Gandhiji: "For you the day has just commenced. But half my night is gone. I get up at half past three!"

Once again it was 11 when he went to bed. But the shouts of *jais* could be heard throughout the night. The whole city was in a gala

mood. Flags, buntings and singing crowds were everywhere in evidence in anticipation of the great day—the 15th August. Hindus and Muslims were seen intermingling till late in the night in many areas where only till yesterday Hindus dared not walk through Muslim areas even in daytime and *vice versa.*

At Gandhiji's request armed guards were withdrawn from his residence as from the midnight of the 15th August and their place by arrangement was taken by volunteers, Hindus and Muslims in equal number. The Muslim host of Gandhiji decorated the house with the National Flag on the eve of the transfer of power.

4

On the Independence Day, Gandhiji woke up at 2 a.m.—an hour earlier than usual. It being the fifth death anniversary of Mahadev Desai also, he observed it, according to his practice on such occasions, by fasting and having a recitation of the whole of the Gita after the morning prayer.

The prayer was still in progress when strains of music broke in. A batch of girls, singing Rabindranath's beautiful songs of freedom, were approaching the house. They came and stopped outside the window of Gandhiji's room where the prayer was still on. Reverently they stopped their singing, joined the prayers, afterwards sang again, took *darshan* and departed. A little later another batch of girls came and sang songs likewise and so it continued till dawn—a beautiful beginning to the day after the tumult of the previous evening.

Men, women and children in their thousands were waiting for his *darshan* as he went out for his morning walk. Eager crowds besieged the mansion the whole day. Every half an hour he had to come out to give *darshan.* The members of the West Bengal Cabinet also came for his blessings. Gandhiji said to them: "From today you have to wear the crown of thorns. Strive ceaselessly to cultivate truth and non-violence. Be humble. Be forbearing. The British rule no doubt put you on your mettle. But now you will be tested through and through. Beware of power; power corrupts. Do not let yourselves be entrapped by its pomp and pageantry. Remember, you are in office to serve the poor in India's villages. May God help you."

Stirring scenes of national rejoicing marked by unique demonstrations of Hindu-Muslim unity were witnessed in Calcutta on the 15th August. From early morning mixed parties of Hindus and Muslims began to go about in trucks to various parts of the city shouting slogans, "Hindu Muslim Ek Ho" ("Let Hindus and Muslims unite") and "Hindu Muslim Bhai Bhai" ("Hindus and Muslims are brothers"). Till a late hour at night vast crowds, in which Hindus and Muslims

intermingled, jammed all thoroughfares, sending up deafening shouts of "Hindus and Muslims unite" and "Jai Hind" ("Victory to India"). It was as if after the black clouds of a year of madness the sunshine of sanity and goodwill had suddenly broken through.

In their exuberance the crowd invaded Government House and Rajaji, the Governor, became a virtual prisoner in his own house.

There were stirring scenes of fraternisation before Gandhiji's residence, but Gandhiji's face betrayed no sign of exuberance. His eyes were turned inward searching for the face of his Maker to light his path and indicate to him the next step.

Nearly 30,000 persons gathered that evening in the prayer ground. The crowd was dense. What was five minutes' walk took twenty minutes to cover. Gandhiji congratulated the citizens of Calcutta on the unity they had achieved. If the delirious fraternisation in the city was sincere and not momentary, it was better even than in the Khilafat days. It saddened him all the more, therefore, to hear, he said, that madness still raged in Lahore. He felt sure that the noble example of Calcutta, if it was sincere, would affect the Punjab and other parts of India. He warned the people that now that they were free, they should use their freedom with wise restraint. They were bound to treat Europeans, who stayed in India, with the same regard as they would expect for themselves. They must realise that they were masters of no-one but themselves. They dared not compel anyone to do anything against his will.

Following Gandhiji, Suhrawardy addressed the gathering. Until the Hindus went back to their abandoned homes and the Muslims to theirs, they would not think, he said, that their work was finished. Some people thought, he continued, that Hindu-Muslim unity could never be achieved, "but by God's will and Mahatmaji's *kripa* (grace) what only three or four days before was considered an impossibility has miraculously turned into a fact." He was not, however, satisfied with that. He had heard that attempts were being made to compel Muslims to shout Jai Hind. "Muslims will do nothing under compulsion but they will shout Jai Hind of their spontaneous free will." With that, he asked the mixed gathering of Hindus and Muslims to shout "Jai Hind" with him which they did with a deafening roar. A faint, ineffable smile played on Gandhiji's lips as he watched the soul-stirring scene.

At night Gandhiji made a tour of the city and witnessed the scenes of fraternisation that were in progress in various parts. Shaheed Suhrawardy drove the car. At a crowded street corner the people recognised them and hundreds of Muslims instantly surrounded the car. They shouted, "Mahatma Gandhi Zindabad" ("Long live Mahatma Gandhi") and again and again made Gandhiji and Suhrawardy shout Jai Hind with them. Some sprinkled rose water

and scent over them and shouted "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai" ("Victory to Mahatma Gandhi"). At another point, Muslim youngsters swarmed round their car and thrust their arms inside to shake hands.

Gandhiji observed the day by fasting and extra spinning. Shaheed Suhrawardy fasted with him.

Gandhiji to Agatha Harrison 15th August, 1947

> You know my way of celebrating great events such as today's, is to thank God for it and therefore to pray. This prayer must be accompanied by a fast. . . . And as a mark of identification with the poor and dedication there must be spinning. Hence I must not be satisfied with the spinning I do everyday, but I must do as much as is possible in consistence with my other appointments. . . .
>
> You refer . . . to Winterton's speech [6] which you will be surprised to learn I have not read. . . . I rarely get a moment to read newspapers. Some portions are either read to me or I glance through them during odd moments. What does it matter who talks in my favour or against me if I myself am sound at bottom? After all you and I have to do our duty in the best manner we know and keep on smiling.
>
> How I wish I could tell you all about the happenings here! Perhaps Horace (Alexander) will. . . .

A letter to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, read: "I am in a Muslim house. They are all very good. I have taken no-one from Sodepur (Ashram). Hence the help I need comes only from Muslim friends. This is not for me a new experience. It reminds me of old days in South Africa and the Khilafat days here. For the moment I am no enemy. Who knows how long this will last! Hindus and Muslims have become friends practically in a day. Suhrawardy has become transformed, so it looks." [7]

Rajaji came to see Gandhiji in the course of the day. As a mark of respect he left his sandals at the entrance, and walked the whole length of the hall barefoot though visitors came up to Gandhiji's room with their shoes on. It did one's soul good to see the cronies meet—Rajaji slightly bent with age, Gandhiji worn by care but the faces of both beaming joy and happiness. They exchanged sallies of wit, jokes and words of mellowed wisdom for over an hour.

5

Independence was now twenty-four hours old. As Gandhiji went out for his usual walk next morning, a vast crowd lined his route. He

utilised their presence to impress upon them the necessity of observing voluntary restraint and discipline on festive occasions and requested them to spare him the ordeal of shouting. The shouting died out at once.

The crowds had made the precincts of Gandhiji's residence filthy by spitting. To teach them a lesson in cleanliness, he began to go out for his walks barefoot. There was an immediate improvement. "You see how it works," he remarked to his companions.

The prayer meeting on the 16th August was attended by nearly fifty thousand people. Referring to a report which he had received the previous day about a crowd having taken possession of Government House, Gandhiji said to the gathering: "Historians have testified that in ancient India, people had no need to lock their doors. In Rama Rajya thefts were unknown. Such is our tradition of honesty and truth. And now we are told that unruly crowds smashed furniture in Government House and pilfered a plate on the Independence Day." It was a matter of shame, too, that the military had to make a show of force to induce the crowd to vacate the Government House premises. It was a disgrace, if true. He would feel happy to be told, he concluded, that what had been removed from the Government House had voluntarily been restored by those who had taken it.

The prayer meeting on the following day was attended by over one hundred thousand people. As Gandhiji viewed the surging mass delirious with enthusiasm, he again wondered within himself how far their enthusiasm was genuine and what the depth of their feeling really was. Voicing a sudden misgiving within him he said: "Everybody is showering congratulations on me for the miracle that Calcutta is witnessing. Let us all thank God for His abundant mercy. But let us not, in this pardonable exuberance, forget that there are isolated spots in Calcutta, where all is not well. I have heard that in one place the Hindus are not prepared to welcome back the Muslim residents who were obliged to leave their homes." He spoke, too, about the indiscipline of the crowds who came to his residence and the awkward position in which they put the police by their rowdy behaviour. This was another disturbing sign. "I appreciate your overflowing affection, but I hope it will not prove to be a momentary ebullition."

Suhrawardy announced that Muslims had invited their Hindu brethren to participate in the Id reunion to be held the next day—the 18th August—or on the day after. He had also been informed that many Hindus had expressed their intention to send food to the mosques for their Muslim brethren to break their fast. Referring to the large attendance of Hindus and Muslims at the meeting Suhrawardy said that no-one could dream a few days ago that such a big meeting of both the communities could be held in Calcutta or that Hindus could pass through localities predominantly inhabited by Muslims without coming to harm and *vice versa*. Now there was

not a place in Calcutta where Hindus and Muslims were not fraternising with each other and were not trying to remove the causes which had kept them separate. Proceeding Suhrawardy narrated how when he went to the Park Circus area with the object of forming reception committees to welcome Hindus back to their abandoned homes with garlands, he found that they were already going to their deserted houses without waiting for the formation of the committees and fraternising with the Muslims and this in an area where till a few days ago even Sikh drivers dared not ply their taxis. This miracle had been achieved, Suhrawardy repeated, "by the grace of God and through Mahatmaji's *kripa*." Continuing he remarked amidst laughter that they all knew he did not say all that before. Now that it had so come to pass, he would expect the Muslims in India to shout "Jai Hind" and Hindus in Pakistan "Pakistan Zindabad". The mistake they had committed was now a thing of the past. "We will show to the world that no differences exist among us."

"Why did I run to Mahatmaji?" Suhrawardy resumed. "It was because I felt that if the trouble started here, it would spread to other parts of India and if it was checked here, there would be peace everywhere. With this end in view I approached Mahatmaji and through God's grace it seems that the hatchet has been buried for ever." With "Jai Hind" he concluded his speech.

Could this be the same Suhrawardy who had been responsible for the Great Calcutta Killing?—people wondered.

But Gandhiji's "sixth sense" saw beneath the surface something more than met the eye. Three months ago in May, when Calcutta was burning, he had sensed even in that fratricide a blind yearning of the people to realise communal unity at work (see page 243). Now in the delirium of fraternisation he detected the seed of danger.

Gandhiji to Mirabehn 18th August, 1947

> The joy of the crowd is there but not in me is any satisfaction. Anything lacking in me? . . . Hindu Muslim unity seems to be too sudden to be true. They ascribe the transformation to me. I wonder! Probably things would have been like this even if I had not been on the scene. Time will show.

The first indication of it came that very day. It was the Muslim festival of Id. An endless concourse of Muslims began visiting Gandhiji's residence from the morning. Muslim friends from Calcutta in large numbers sent gifts of sweets and fruit. As the day advanced, the number of the visitors increased. As Gandhiji was observing his weekly silence, he wrote out a short message of greeting to wish them a happy Id and distributed fruit to them.

There had been some trouble at Barrackpore—14 miles north of

Calcutta—over the taking out of a procession on the previous day. Gandhiji visited Barrackpore in the afternoon, but the trouble had been composed and the whole thing had ended in scenes of fraternisation before he reached the spot. On his arrival he was welcomed with loud cheers and shouting of *jais*.

A Muslim said: "Please forgive us all our lapses. We know we have erred grievously in the past. But now we shall live together with Hindus like brothers." With that the Hindus and Muslims in the crowd embraced each other.

A Hindu representative said: "We do not want to hurt the feelings of our Muslim brethren. We shall stop the music before mosques."

On a slip of paper Gandhiji scribbled: "I hope the decision not to have music in the vicinity of mosques at the *namaz* time is acceptable to all and will be regarded as binding by *all* Hindus, not only those who are present on the spot. The League and the Congress have agreed to solve all differences by peaceful methods and without resort to force."

The Muslim friends told him that their womenfolk were very eager to see him. Surely he would not disappoint them. Gandhiji acceded to their request. As his car passed through the bazar, Muslim women crowded the roofs and balconies on either side.

The prayer meeting at evening was held on the grounds of the Mohammedan Sporting Club, and was attended by not less than half a million. Muslims were present in unusually large numbers. It was an inspiring spectacle against the background of communal fratricide in other parts of the country to find Hindus and Muslims of Calcutta standing shoulder to shoulder. They cheered Gandhiji as he stood up with folded hands to acknowledge their greetings and wished them a happy Id.

After Gandhiji had spoken, followed by Shaheed, Mohammad Usman addressed the gathering. He had, he said, felt nervous and worried on the eve of the Independence Day. But by the grace of Allah and Gandhiji's labours, the Hindu Muslim quarrel had become a thing of the past even before zero hour. "We must now be prepared to make sacrifices to preserve our independence as we have made to win it."

As Gandhiji saw the happy faces of the masses before him with Hindus and Muslims fraternising with one another and the volunteers of the Muslim League and the Congress all assembled together as one body, his heart danced with joy. The Khilafat days of the twenties seemed to have returned.

There had been report of an incident that had occurred at Kanchrapara, an industrial area, 26 miles north of Calcutta, over the old, vexed question of music before mosques. The police had opened fire and several people had been killed. Gandhiji visited the place on

the 19th August. In regard to the unfortunate incident he suggested that until the Congress and the League or the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and the Indian Union came to a different agreement, the practice in regard to the music before mosques that had been followed during the British regime, often under compulsion, should be freely and voluntarily followed in both the States.

In his evening prayer address Gandhiji observed that behind the scenes of fraternisation that they were witnessing were pointers like Barrackpore, Kanchrapara and others which he could mention. He would not let anyone plead excuse or extenuation for them, he said. They should overlook the past mistakes or limitations of the minority, who had now no-one but the majority to look to for justice. A Muslim friend had said to him with a sigh that day that there was nothing left for them but a kind of subjection to the Hindu majority. They must suffer in silence the playing of music before mosques, whilst they were offering prayers. He had heard that statement, Gandhiji observed, not without shame and sorrow. He would have no despair on the part of the Muslims. It was up to the majority to reassure them by their large-hearted generosity.

Gandhiji had come straight to the prayer meeting from his visit to Kanchrapara in the afternoon without taking any rest. Referring to the heavy strain that Gandhiji was undergoing Suhrawardy, in his after-prayer speech, remarked that it was only possible for a "Mahatma" to stand such strain even at his advanced age. "I have now realised the greatness of Mahatmaji."

Someone from the audience shouted: "You ought to have realised it much earlier."

"After the attainment of freedom," Suhrawardy answered, "this sense has dawned upon me. Mahatma Gandhi is really a Mahatma."

Over four lakhs attended the evening prayer on the 20th August. Those who could not reach the meeting ground owing to the dense crowd thronged on the roofs of the adjoining buildings. Hundreds of people sat on the branches of every available tree in the area.

6

Under the notional division of Bengal, the Hindu-majority districts of Khulna and Chittagong Hill Tracts had been included in West Bengal and the Muslim majority district of Murshidabad in East Bengal. The Boundary Commission's award reversed this. The independence day in these areas had been celebrated according to the notional division. On the reversal of the notional division two days later, the flags that were being flown in those areas since the independence day, became wrong flags. This had led to some tension. The matter

being referred to Gandhiji, he said that there should not be the slightest hesitation in replacing the wrong flags with right ones. Personally he was of opinion that as the two States were on friendly terms with one another there was no reason why they could not display each other's flag in the two Dominions just as England and America could do. "Even if they in Pakistan don't, we in the Indian Union should. Let us do the correct thing irrespective of what the other party does."[8]

Gandhiji was delighted to receive a telephone message from Bihar saying that the Calcutta miracle was having a profound effect on Bihar too.

In a women's meeting on the 21st August, he asked all Hindu women to go among their Muslim sisters, befriend them and render them every service of which they were capable. By way of self-purification, they should root out the last trace of untouchability from their hearts. He had always maintained that the Hindu Muslim question was only a projection of the taint of untouchability which Hinduism had harboured in its soul.

Nearly seven hundred thousand people attended the prayer meeting on the 21st August held at Park Circus. The Pakistan and the Indian Union flags were flown side by side by the Congress and the League volunteers. Pointing to this Gandhiji remarked that he felt he could now proceed to Noakhali. He congratulated them on the unity that had been achieved but warned them not to lull themselves into the feeling that there was nothing more left to be done. Peace committees should immediately take up the work of stabilising communal relations in the city and a strong rehabilitation committee should begin collecting funds to provide relief where it was required.

Thus each day the prayer meeting was held in a different part of the city, bringing bigger and still bigger crowds of Hindus and Muslims together. Everywhere the theme of Gandhiji's message was the same —they must become worthy citizens of free India.

Shaheed Suhrawardy, it had been noticed, was not sleeping under the same roof as Gandhiji according to their compact. Some people warned Gandhiji that Suhrawardy was not playing the game; he could not be trusted. Gandhiji admitted that his distrust of Suhrawardy was not completely gone. "When that happens, I shall proclaim the happy news."[9] He was not prepared, however, he said, to depart from the principle that it was the deceiver who was always the loser, never the willing dupe. If Suhrawardy deceived him, then Suhrawardy would be the loser, not he. As a matter of fact, he added, Shaheed had already started sleeping in Hydari Mansion.

On the night of 26th August, Gandhiji got up at midnight, lighted the lamp and sat down by himself to dispose of the arrears of work that had piled up as a result of his telescoping engagements during the week. He worked till half past one, and then lay down to rest. At 2 a.m.

he again resumed work and continued it after the morning prayer. "I feel very restless and worried," he remarked to one of his companions. "Why should one, who has surrendered his all to Him, worry at all? Does it not indicate lack of faith on my part? But patience, my striving continues unabated."

The presence of a large labouring population in the Kidderpur dock area in Calcutta had converted it into another potential danger spot. Gandhiji held his prayer meeting there on the 27th August. Addressing his post-prayer remarks particularly to the labourers, he said that the future of labour was closely interlinked with communal harmony. Labour would become invincible when it realised its strength and learnt the art of combination. That could not happen if the workers continued to discriminate between a Hindu owner of industry and a Muslim, or if the Hindu section of labour regarded itself as separate from or antagonistic to the Muslim section and both from the Harijan section.

On the following day when Gandhiji went to hold his prayer meeting at the University Science College, some students scribbled on the blackboard insulting remarks about Suhrawardy. For this he gave them a sound scolding. It was against the Indian tradition of hospitality, he told them, to insult anyone who was their guest. An insult to Suhrawardy was, therefore, an insult to him. There was a general complaint against the students that they showed lack of discipline and of respect towards their teachers, whereas it was precisely these two qualities which constituted the fundamentals of a student's training. The Indian ideal of a student's life had set forth the renunciation of a recluse as the hall-mark of a student's life and the cultivation of self-discipline and self-restraint as the goal of his striving. In view of their excited state of mind, he said, he had asked Suhrawardy not to address the gathering after him that day. It was a matter of humiliation for him and should be for them also.

The secretary of the Students' Union afterwards apologised to Gandhiji on behalf of the students.

"The Hindus can go to the Indian Union, the Muslims to Pakistan; where shall the poor Indian Christians go?" a group of Christians asked Gandhiji the next day. He told them that the whole of India was their country, if they regarded themselves as one with their compatriots. The question could only arise if they took a narrow or parochial view of religion and of their own status. They must keep in step with the spirit of the times.

7

People have often wondered what enabled Gandhiji to command and retain the loyalty, devotion and sacrifice of so many diverse elements

and hold them prisoners of his love so much so as to render obsolete our current notions as to the bounds of human nature itself. How did he manage to reconcile and harmonise such a vast medley of conflicting temperaments and interests to build up the power of non-violence? The following assortment from his outgoing mail from the 28th to 31st August, when he had not a moment which he could call his own, will afford a glimpse of the Master at work; the reckless abandon with which he burnt the candle at both ends to light the path of those who needed his guidance; the measure of his concern for and identification with those who had dedicated themselves to the cause; his mellowed wisdom; the concentrated attention he gave to every detail of constructive work which provided the organisation and drive behind his non-violent mass upheavals; and the originality which he brought to bear upon whatever problem he touched.

To the daughter of an Indian Governor of one of the Provinces: "I have your letter. I am in God's hands. In a way that is true of all of us. I do not know where I shall be tomorrow. The work here is most difficult. No-one can say what will be the end. Tell father I have replied to his wire. Are you helping him?"

To Mirabehn : "I am glad you are better. Your 55 years is as nothing for a disciplined life. But you are careful for nothing. . . . My movement has become uncertain. . . . 'Look at the sparrows'. They do not know what they will do the next moment. Let us literally live from moment to moment."

To a co-worker whom he had left behind to carry on his work in Bihar: "I do not see the point of your difficulty as regards my article 'My Neighbours'. . . . I have now looked up the book. So far as my knowledge of English goes, there is no room for the change suggested by you. . . . I have sent replies to your other questions. . . . You can certainly write to me whenever you feel the need. It does not matter if I cannot reply immediately. Of course I shall try to."

To an inmate of Sevagram Ashram: "I have your letter. I shall be so glad if your boy (who was suffering from an incurable disease) is cured."

To a co-worker engaged in nature-cure activity (regarding the ethics of accepting "tainted" money as donations for a good cause): "I have already written about the dairy. I see no harm in accepting donations in the service of a cause so long as the donor does so without expectation of any return. I hope you are taking good care of your health."

To Dr. Syed Mahmud, Minister, Bihar Government: "You were to have come with me but could not. . . . If things there continue all right (as a result) I shall be content. Your son saw me. . . . Today I have been up since 2.30 a.m. I get very little time for writing. I must meet people if I am to cope with the situation here. I hope

Begum Saheba is well. It would be good if you could stay for some time at Ranchi (hill station)."

To Abdul Qayum Ansari, Minister for Rehabilitation, Bihar: "M. has just given me the news about your illness. In my opinion illness in a public worker is a crime. Hope you have recovered by now."

To Rajkumari Amrit Kaur: "One must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean. If a few drops are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty. And do not let your body suffer. . . . I cannot yet go to Noakhali. They want me there, as also in Bihar and Sylhet. And Jawaharlal now wires I should be in Delhi."

To the manager, Sevagram Ashram: "I wonder why my letter did not reach you. It might be due to some mistake at this end. . . . I cannot do everything with my own hands. Where is X? So Y has left. But that does not matter. It is bound to affect the atmosphere though. He is behaving as a lunatic but I treasure his purity."

To an Ashramite from South India: "Your letter. *Bidi* (Indian cigarette) fumes cannot cause that much upset. By all means visit the Andhra High School and return soon. I am glad A and B have recovered."

To a youngster in Sevagram Ashram: "I have your letter. Write to me after your examination is over. I shall then be able to tell you what you should do. . . . I note that you have passed the third grade examination in Hindustani with credit without much effort. I like it. You are not keeping well. That pains me. Much of your ailment is psychological. Your mind has not yet become steady. Mental ill-health is bound to influence the body also."

To my brother: "I have your letter. . . . What does it matter if everything you possess in Gujrat (our home town in West Punjab) is lost (see next chapter). In this general conflagration no-one may expect to escape. Sushila is in her proper place. She is under God's care. Pyarelal will meet me today or tomorrow. He is expected."

To my mother, who was feeling anxious about her daughter's safety at Wah camp: "Why do you worry about Sushila? God is the Lord and Master of all. Let us not cease to trust in Him. Rajkumari (Amrit Kaur) has brought the news that Sushila is all right. I hope you are keeping well. Baby (my little niece) must be delightfully naughty!"

To a worker engaged in nature-cure activity: "I am afraid, without milk we shall not be able to tackle the problem of health. . . . We can certainly experiment with those who can (and are willing to) carry on without milk."

To a Maharaja: "I have sent you a receipt for rupees one lakh. I find that for Noakhali I have already an amount of one and a half lakh of rupees lying with me. That is enough for the time being. But

besides Noakhali, I have to provide funds for work in Tipperah, Feni, Chittagong, Calcutta and Bihar. I have some funds for this purpose also but I would feel more at ease if I had your permission to use the amount you have sent for the relief of distress among Hindus and Muslims in all these places. I shall await your reply."

8

The happenings in Calcutta had by now begun to radiate their influence in other parts of the country besides Bihar. On the 24th August, the Muslim League party in the Constituent Assembly of the Indian Union passed a resolution expressing "its deep sense of appreciation of the services rendered by Mahatma Gandhi to the cause of restoration of peace and goodwill between the communities in Calcutta and saving hundreds of innocent lives and property from destruction. By his ceaseless efforts in the cause of maintenance of peace, he has shown breadth of vision and large-heartedness. The Muslim League sincerely trusts that Mr. Suhrawardy and other Muslims will continue to cooperate with him and show their appreciation of his laudable efforts."

What a pity that this realisation of Gandhiji's "breadth of vision" and "large-heartedness" came only after India had been cut into two and so much innocent blood had been shed!

In an article captioned "Miracle or Accident?" in *Harijan*, Gandhiji wrote:

> Shaheed . . . Suhrawardy and I are living together in Beliaghata where Muslims have been reported to be sufferers. . . . We are living in a Muslim house and Muslim volunteers are attending to our comforts with the greatest attention. . . . Here in the compound numberless Hindus and Muslims continue to stream in shouting the favourite slogans. One might almost say that the joy of fraternisation is leaping up from hour to hour.
>
> Is this to be called a miracle or an accident? By whatever name it may be described, it is quite clear that the credit that is being given to me from all sides is quite undeserved; nor can it be said to be deserved by Shaheed. . . . This sudden upheaval is not the work of one or two men. We are toys in the hands of God. He makes us dance to His tune. The utmost, therefore, that man can do is to refrain from interfering with the dance and that he should tender full obedience to his Maker's will. Thus considered, it can be said that in this miracle He has used us two as His instruments and as for myself I only ask whether the dream of my youth is to be realised in the evening of my life.

> For those who have full faith in God, this is neither a miracle nor an accident. A chain of events can be clearly seen to show that the two were being prepared, unconsciously to themselves, for fraternisation. In this process our advent on the scene enabled the onlooker to give us credit for the consummation of the happy event.
>
> Be that as it may, the delirious happenings remind me of the early days of the Khilafat movement. The fraternisation then burst on the public as a new experience. Moreover, we had then the Khilafat and Swaraj as our twin goals. Today we have nothing of the kind. We have drunk the poison of mutual hatred and so this nectar of fraternisation tastes all the sweeter and the sweetness should never wear out.[10]

Wrote Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji: "In the Punjab we have 55,000 soldiers and large scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting. As a serving officer, as well as an administrator, may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the One-Man Boundary Force, not forgetting his Second in Command, Mr. Suhrawardy. You should have heard the enthusiastic applause which greeted the mention of your name in the Constituent Assembly on the 15th of August, when all of us were thinking so much of you."[11]

Gandhiji ignored the compliment and seized upon the challenge. In reply he wrote: "I do not know if Shaheed . . . and I can legitimately appropriate the compliment you pay us. Probably suitable conditions were ready for us to take the credit for what appears to have been a magical performance. Am I right in gathering from your letter that you would like me to try the same thing for the Punjab?"[12]

CHAPTER XVII

CRUMBLING HEAVENS

1

WHAT GANDHIJI had feared all along, and prophesied again and again to unheeding ears, happened at last. The heavens began to crumble in the Punjab. On the 17th August, he received the following wire at Calcutta:

> Since Monday a terrible massacre of the Hindus has been in progress in Lahore city, surpassing Rawalpindi. Hundreds of dead are lying strewn on the roads. Anarkali bazar and other business quarters have been burnt down. The greater part of the city is in flames. Water supply in Hindu residential quarters has been cut off. The trapped Hindus, who tried to escape, were shot down by the military and the police. More than three hundred Hindus were burnt alive. The Hindus are without food and water. They are threatened with destruction. Do something immediately. Your presence in Lahore is necessary.

In passing on this wire to Sardar Patel, Gandhiji wrote: "I have not replied to it. It is terrible if true. Let me know the facts."[1]

Pandit Nehru had gone on the 17th August on a two days' visit to the affected areas on receiving the news of the fresh outbreak in the Punjab. On his return to Delhi he wired to Gandhiji on the 21st August, sending him his "respectful congratulations on the wonderful change in Calcutta" and telling him that the Punjab needed his "healing presence".

Gandhiji replied on the following day: "I have got stuck here. Noakhali demands my presence. Bihar too will take a few days. Under the circumstances I do not know when I shall be able to go to the Punjab. You will guide me."

Pandit Nehru wrote back: "I do not ask you to go to the Punjab immediately. We must face the situation now. Later I might request you to go there."[2] But the report he sent about the situation in the Punjab was most disturbing:

> The southern districts, which had been free from any major trouble, blew up unexpectedly so far as we were concerned. The

districts of Hoshiarpur and Jullunder especially have witnessed some horrible deeds and large-scale massacre of Muslims. It is quite impossible to form any estimate of people killed. I imagine, however, that during the last month the number killed in Eastern Punjab might amount to 7 or 8 thousands. These figures may be completely wrong as they are guess-work.

In Western Punjab probably the number of those killed is much less, may be half the other figure. This, of course applies to recent weeks only and not to the previous Rawalpindi and Multan killings. There has been far more arson and looting in Western Punjab than in Eastern.

All this killing business has reached a stage of complete madness and vast populations are deserting their habitations and trekking to the west or the east. A large number had left Western Punjab in previous months, as you know. Now the process is repeated on both sides.

The present trouble started about three weeks ago in Amritsar rural areas. The Sikhs were the aggressors. Within a week Lahore retaliated, the Muslims being the aggressors. Since then it has spread on both sides, perhaps more so in Eastern Punjab where well-armed bands, chiefly Sikh, partly Hindu, had been roaming about and attacking predominantly Muslim villages. *Normally Muslims are safe in a village where they are in a minority. Their neighbours do not attack them. Armed bands go specially to Muslim majority villages in Eastern Punjab.* Something of this kind happens in Western Punjab too. . . . (See also Vol. I, page 623).

It appears that most of the petty Government officials join in this business, including policemen. Sometimes soldiers also. The whole thing is revolting in the extreme.[3] (Italics mine).

Pandit Nehru added that he had hesitated to write to him all this so far as he did not wish to add to his worries. But a stage had arrived when, he felt, Gandhiji should know what was happening: "At present there is no doubt that the Muslim League leaders as well as X and Y (the Sikh leaders) are trying to stop the slaughter and arson, having previously lighted the fuse. . . . I have no doubt that we shall put an end to this business within the next few days, at any rate so far as major events are concerned. But what a terrible legacy! The Punjab will be a ruined Province, both west and east, and vast numbers of human beings will be destitute."

Alarming news had begun to come in from other sources, too. A deputation of the Punjabis in Calcutta saw Gandhiji on the 24th August before Pandit Nehru's report had arrived.

Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru 24th August, 1947

Punjabis in Calcutta have been pressing me to go to the Punjab at once. They tell me a terrible story. Thousands have been killed! A few thousand girls have been kidnapped! Hindus cannot live in the Pakistan area, nor Muslims in the other portion. Add to this the information that the two wings of the army took sides and worked havoc! Can any of this be true!

When do you think I should go to the Punjab if at all? I have still work in Calcutta, then in Noakhali and Bihar. But everything can be laid aside to go to the Punjab if it is proved to be necessary.

Pandit Nehru had, in the meantime, gone on his second visit to the East Punjab. Immediately on his return on the morning of 25th August, he wrote:

Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji 25th August, 1947

In my last letter I gave you some idea of conditions in the Punjab. This second visit has depressed me even more. . . . Normally even after the worst riots most people stick to their homes. Now with the coming of Pakistan the urge to get out of it has added to the normal urge to escape from a dangerous zone. On both sides of the border in the Punjab people are affected in this way and mass migrations are taking place on a vast scale. These are largely spontaneous. Inevitably this is resulting and will result in misery for hundreds of thousands of people. It will mean also a tremendous burden on all Governments concerned, Provincial and Central, on both sides. . . .

The Muslims of Amritsar district, that is the survivors, told me that 50,000 of them had perished in the district. This is certainly wild exaggeration. But we should not be surprised if anything up to 10,000 were killed in Eastern Punjab. . . . There has been widespread killing on both sides and large numbers of refugees have been massacred. In Eastern Punjab probably the Akali Sikhs have indulged in killing more than anyone else. Worse than the killing have been the horrible outrages on women on both sides.

It is said and rightly that Lahore and Amritsar are quiet. The fact is that there are not many people left there to be killed. That is to say that Lahore has become almost entirely a Muslim city and Amritsar a Hindu-Sikh city. . . .

More and more, both in the East and West Punjab, habitually lawless elements are coming to the front and they are not prepared to listen to the leaders. There are internal conflicts

also in both Provinces. In Western Punjab there is conflict between Mamdot, the Chief Minister, and Feroz Khan Noon. Noon appears to be encouraging the wilder elements in the League. In Eastern Punjab there is a good deal of stress and strain between the Sikhs and Hindus. The Akalis, or some of them, do not hesitate to talk in terms of establishing a Sikh State as a result of this turmoil. Their logic is not very good, but there is little doubt that many of them have vague hopes that something advantageous to them might happen if trouble continued. Some of these think that they can force India to go to war with Pakistan. In such a war they imagine that Pakistan is bound to be defeated and then Sikhistan will emerge.

Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh, however, have been trying to get peace restored. Their influence does not seem to go as far as many people imagined. The wilder elements among the Akalis have joined hands with some of the R.S.S. people.

Pandit Nehru was not quite sure about Gandhiji's going to the Punjab yet, but Mountbatten's commando eye had seized the significance of the "One-Man Boundary Force" and the tactical value of the weapon of non-violence.

To Gandhiji this did not come as a surprise. Had he not said again and again that non-violence of the brave might come easier to a seasoned warrior with ingrained habits of discipline, resourcefulness, endurance and death-defying courage than to one who had no training in these and whose practice of non-violence was largely of the negative variety? Despite their soldiering for over a quarter of a century in non-violence under his own lead, Congress leaders had really never outgrown the civilian's mystic faith in the boundless potency of arms. Mountbatten, the professional soldier, on the other hand, showed an experienced fighter's insight into the inadequacy of arms by themselves to win battles. Congress leaders, owing to their personal attachment to Gandhiji, hesitated to expose him to grave personal risks. Mountbatten, who had made living dangerously his life's occupation, thought it only right that Gandhiji should want to run "the maddest risk that a sane man can run" in pursuit of his ideal for which alone he lived and for the attainment of which he counted no sacrifice as too great.

To come back to Pandit Nehru's note: "This morning, at a meeting of the Joint Defence Council, Mountbatten urged me to request you to go to the Punjab and he hoped that you would repeat your Calcutta miracle there. I told him that I was myself not clear about this. I feel you should go but not just yet."

* * *

Disquieting news had, in the meantime, reached Sardar Patel from Wah camp where Gandhiji had left Sushila on his return journey from Kashmir in the first week of August. At first all went well. The refugees were very much heartened. But nervousness returned as soon as his back was turned. "The old man has played us a trick! How clever of him!" remarked one refugee to another. "This girl! How can she protect us?" rejoined another. "Mahatmaji has left us his non-violent gun for our protection," sententiously commented a third. And they all had a hearty laugh over the quip.

> I stayed there, fully convinced that it was wrong for the Hindus and Sikhs to flee from Pakistan [Sushila afterwards recorded]. They had inhabited the land from generations and were entitled to live there. If Indians could fight for their rights in South Africa, were they to relinquish their homes in Pakistan?
>
> I placed my ideas before the refugees. Some appreciated them, some were resentful. They were not prepared to live the life of hostages, they said. They would rather be beggars in the Indian Union than be big landlords in Pakistan, where even the honour of their womenfolk was not safe. I tried to impress upon them that the right thing for us would be to die in defence of our honour rather than be bullied out.
>
> I visited a few villages from where the people had fled. In one village the Muslim landlord had given protection to the minority community and had nipped the trouble in the bud. There had been only three deaths and a few houses had been burnt. I was told that the Hindus would be welcomed if they came back. But in some other villages they were not wanted back. I was puzzled as to what to say to the people in the circumstances. The Deputy Commissioner came and assured me that the refugees would be quite safe and soon rehabilitation would become possible.[4]

Then the unexpected happened. Trouble again started. The East Punjab was reported to be avenging Rawalpindi and the whole of the West Punjab flared up to avenge the happenings in the East Punjab. "About the 10th of August news began coming in of inhuman deeds in the East and the West Punjab. Several victims of communal fury from places round about us began to pour into the camp hospital. One of them was a young girl of about seventeen—the sole survivor of a group of 74 women, who had jumped into a well to save their honour. Her father Sardar Pratap Singh had come to join the camp earlier. He and his companions had offered armed resistance to the Muslim mobs who had attacked their village. For three days they held the attackers at bay. When at last their ammunition

was exhausted, they had to surrender. Several of them, including their leader, were wounded, some others had died. The survivors were told that they would immediately be converted to Islam. They asked for reprieve till the next day.

"Next morning the hooligans were ready with their scissors to cut off their hair and shave their beards as a symbol of their conversion to Islam. Some among the mob were loudly discussing among themselves as to who was going to have a particular woman to himself. The women heard this. They were ordered to come out to be converted. An elderly sister speaking for the rest answered that they wanted leave to say their prayers for the last time before they surrendered and drink the water from the well, which had recently been constructed. The request was granted. Thereupon seventy-four women and girls entered the compound in which the well was located. They had their ceremonial bath and then began saying their prayers. Their Muslim captors impatiently shouted to them to hurry up. The leader of the women shouted back, 'Come if you dare. You will never touch us alive.' And with that she jumped into the well followed by the rest of the seventy-four. This act of heroic self-sacrifice so touched the gangsters that they stood rooted to the spot, and with bowed heads departed one after another, leaving untouched the men and the children whom they had assembled for conversion. The Sikhs then entered the compound and brought out the bodies of the women who had jumped into the well. All except Sardar Pratap Singh's daughter were dead. At night they were attacked by another Muslim mob but a military patrol came to their rescue and escorted them to Wah camp. When I narrated the story to Gandhiji later, his eyes were wet. 'Non-violent courage never fails,' he said, 'and when the odds are too heavy for man, God comes to the succour in a way least expected.'

"There was a cement factory next door to the camp. It was said to be one of the biggest in the world. I went to visit it. At the end of the visit the factory doctor invited me to his house. He was a Bengali. There was a lovely two year old blonde playing in the house. The doctor explained to me that the child was their adopted daughter. She was a Punjabi. The mother had died in the hospital after childbirth and the father had not cared to claim the child. So the doctor and his wife had adopted her and they simply adored her. Suddenly the doctor's voice became husky: 'For the last one week I am constantly haunted by the fear that when I return home, I may not find her there. They will either kill or kidnap her.' 'Surely, you are unnecessarily anxious,' I protested. 'No-one will touch a child like this and then there are very good security measures in this factory.' 'Yes,' replied the doctor. 'But two days ago a Hindu was murdered while passing with his cement cart in front of my house. He was a factory hand. The assassin pushed the dagger into him from behind.

The place was full of people. Not one tried to stop him. The assailant escaped and is probably still there. Can't you help send away my wife and child to a place of safety?' There was a note of entreaty in his voice. I was deeply moved. The little girl was playing with the dog unconcerned. The thought that anyone could kill an innocent little child like her made me feel sick. I promised to make arrangements for sending away his wife and child to India as early as possible."

Two days later she informed the doctor that he could send away his wife and child on the following day, as all necessary arrangements had been made. "His face lit up. His wife was a little uneasy at the thought of leaving her husband behind. The doctor turned round to me, 'You should also go away with them. This place has become most unsafe.' I thanked him for his kind thought and explained to him that I could not go away. I had to be at my post of duty where Gandhiji had left me. He insisted that I must not expose myself to such grave danger. I must go. 'No, I cannot. Please don't worry about me. So long as my time is not up, I shall be safe anywhere and when my time is up, there will be safety for me nowhere.' Something in my words and manner must have touched him. He stood up with a new look on his face. 'Thank you for the arrangements you have made for the evacuation of the members of my family. But I am not sending them away. If this place is safe for you, it is safe enough for them.' There were tears in his eyes. My heart overflowed with gratitude to God and Bapu. I said to myself, 'He has put the seed of a little faith and courage in the hearts of insignificant beings like us, which in its turn can inspire similar feeling in other breasts.'

"The number of the wounded coming to the hospital increased. A truck-load nearly of the dead and the dying arrived one day. Amongst them was a few months' old infant with several fractures. The mother had tried to shield her baby from the assassins and, when she fell dead herself, the arm and leg of the infant were twisted and fractured under the weight of the corpse. The hospital staff were worked to exhaustion.

"One day report arrived of an impending attack on the camp. At night the military came and took up position at strategic points commanding the camp. I had gone to bed dead tired. Some people came running to me. 'Please get up, the attackers are coming.' Wearily I replied, 'Come and tell me when they are here.' They stood dumb-founded for a moment and then went away. After a while some social workers working with me in the camp compound shook me up. 'There is panic in the barracks. Women and children are wailing. You should go and comfort them.' I got up and walked to the sector which was reported to be the most panicky. Military jeeps were on the move. There was a blaze of light from the quarter where they were taking up positions. I felt worried. 'Supposing an attack

comes, how shall I protect these people? They had faith in Gandhiji and Gandhiji had placed them in my charge. He had said I should die before any harm befell them. It was simple enough to die but would I get that opportunity? Would I be able to stand up to the test?' A companion asked me, 'How do you expect them to defend themselves non-violently? What exactly should they do?' My reply did not carry conviction to him. Non-violent self-defence cannot be learnt at a moment's notice. If I could set an example by laying down my own life non-violently, that might help. I felt unhappy at the thought of my own inadequacy. When we reached the barracks the men who had first brought the news of the impending attack were already there. They must have told them how they had found me sleeping in spite of the alarming rumour. That served to reassure them. We talked with them for a while and then came back. There was no attack on the camp that night. When similar rumours led to military movements on the two subsequent nights, there was much less panic."

By the time Sushila was to leave Wah camp according to the original programme, life had become most uncertain there. More refugees started pouring in. They were attacked on the way and many of them, including women and children, arrived in a terrible condition. "Then, one fine morning (after the 15th August) the mixed guard for the camp was replaced by a Baluchi (Pakistani) guard. It was reported that a Baluchi guard had been overheard telling some local Muslims that they could now attack the camp with impunity. My faith was shaken. No longer could I tell refugees in the camp that they must not think of leaving Pakistan. There were stories about the partisan behaviour of the police and the military and a young Muslim officer of nationalistic views told me that there was much truth in them. I had to acknowledge defeat and write to responsible quarters in the Indian Union pleading for speedy evacuation of the Wah camp."

In the last week of August, Sardar Patel received the following report from her through a Sikh military officer, who came from the Wah camp: "We are completely cut off. No post comes or leaves this place. People here are living in hourly fear of certain death. I am trying my best to keep up their morale. They won't allow me to leave this place. . . . It is some consolation that my presence here gives them courage. The Camp Commander says the camp was going to be attacked three or four days ago. But the attack did not come. You should send some reliable person to report on the exact situation here.

"Some Hindu refugees who have managed to reach here disguised as Muslims report that Gujranwala, Wazirabad, Gujrat and Lalamusa are burning. Sialkot too is reported to be ablaze from

yesterday. A similar report has come from Gujarkhan near Rawalpindi. It is said that the railway track on either side is strewn with the dead. The attack on village Sukhoke in Rawalpindi district was warded off by the presence of the military police the day before yesterday. Yesterday 500 Muslims again launched an attack, killing 15 Hindus.

"The situation is deteriorating. It is difficult to say when the Muslim mass may again go out of control. On the Id day the Muslims here held a meeting. Some Hindus and Sikhs were invited. I also was invited. There is no atmosphere in the villages for the return of the refugees. The *Thanedar* (himself a Muslim) took the Muslims severely to task and dubbed those who had committed barbarous crimes as goondas. The older set among the Muslims do not want it, but the youth and the National Guards are out for blood.

"People are in great panic. It is feared that this camp will be attacked after non-Muslim troops are withdrawn. At Taxila station a passenger train, it is reported, was stopped by pulling the alarm chain in the presence of the Muslim military and police. Two Sikhs were killed and another two or three wounded. At subsequent stations the military were heard to be congratulating the murderers.

"It is a question how long the refugees can continue to remain in this camp. Their condition is anything but satisfactory. . . . The civil surgeon visited the camp the other day. He told them (refugees) to go to the relief organisations. 'They are your own kith and kin.' Another officer (Muslim) was heard to remark, 'How long are we going to have these fellows on our hands?' There is no trace of sympathy for the refugees nor any feeling of shame over what has happened."

The Sardar took immediate action.

Sardar Patel to Liaquat Ali Khan 24th August, 1947

Have just had a special message from Sushila Nayar who had been left by Gandhiji at non-Muslim refugee camp at Wah near Rawalpindi that whole camp panic-stricken and in grave danger of extinction owing hostile attitude of Muslims in neighbourhood and apprehended partisanship of local troops and police particularly in view of impending withdrawal of non-Muslim troops who had been guarding the camp. Would be grateful for immediate action to restore confidence amongst refugees and for proper arrangements regarding military protection and rations. . . . Should there be any difficulty in making arrangements I would suggest immediate arrangements for transfer of whole camp to East Punjab. . . . Would be grateful for suitable instructions to Ghazanfar Ali so that matter could be settled by personal discussion or his personal intervention. Best regards.

Liaquat Ali Khan to Sardar Patel 24th August, 1947

Your most immediate telegram regarding Wah refugee camp. Have asked Ghazanfar Ali Khan and Premier West Punjab take all steps ensure protection of refugees.

In sending to Gandhiji Sushila's report and his telegram to Liaquat Ali Khan, Sardar Patel wrote to him: "I was feeling very concerned at your leaving Sushila behind. Today a special military-man has come with a letter from her. I send it to you. . . . The Punjab situation has become very bad. The people there have simply gone mad. Cities and villages are being burnt down. Men are being cut to pieces like vegetables. Reports are coming in that the military and the police are involved in it. People in their thousands are fleeing and spreading panic wherever they go. Eighty-five per cent. of the police personnel are Muslim. It has become difficult to obtain accurate information as to what is happening in the Punjab. Hundreds upon thousands are fleeing. Today Jawaharlal has gone to Jullunder and Amritsar. The League Ministers also will be there. But the masses seem to have gone out of their control. . . . Telegrams sent to the Punjab do not reach there. Railway communications have broken down. . . . The situation is most difficult. It calls for very strenuous effort to prevent the Punjab situation from affecting other places. More and more fleeing refugees from the Punjab are pouring into Delhi. They allow no rest by day or by night. They are distraught with fury and panic and it is most difficult to make them pull themselves together." [5]

Gandhiji's reply to Sardar, dated 26th August, showed how exacting his love could be in respect of those who had identified themselves with him and towards whom he was supposed to be *partial*: "I had left Sushila literally in the jaws of death. Now she will return only when the Wah refugees feel at ease or perish with them. . . . It was only from your letter that I learnt where she is at present. There was a letter from her from Wah soon after I had left. But there was nothing after that. I was, therefore, wondering."

Gandhiji's letter also contained the following: "Great pressure is being put upon me to go to the Punjab. I do not know what I should do. Jawahar, too, writes that I ought to go but not just now. I am fixed up here till Sunday at any rate. After that the idea is to go to Noakhali and from there to Bihar. All this would take up about fifteen days in my case. I do not know what I shall be able to do in Delhi. I am afraid, I may even prove a hindrance in what you are doing."

Sardar Patel to Gandhiji 27th August, 1947

Rajkumari (Amrit Kaur) had accompanied Lady Mountbatten on a three day tour of the Punjab. She returned today at

8 o'clock. She has brought a terrible report. She met Sushila, too. I had asked Lady Mountbatten to bring her back with her. Accordingly Sushila had got ready. But the people in the camp began to weep and wail. She is, therefore, staying on there. This camp is not in danger. We have now made arrangements for some more supply of food, too. She is keeping quite fit. So there is nothing to worry. The rest of course is in God's hands.

The Sardar, it seems, had lost all hope of the Pakistan authorities doing the right by the non-Muslim minorities in West Punjab for lack of will or ability, or both. His mind had begun to move in the direction of exchange of populations. His reply to Gandhiji's inquiry about going to the Punjab echoed that feeling: "What will you do by going to the Punjab? You can do nothing to put out the conflagration. It is not possible for the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims to live together there; Hindus might be able to stay there some time in future, not today. But one cannot imagine Sikhs and Muslims living together even in the remote future. The forces have been thoroughly infected. People in their lakhs are fleeing from either side of the border. Terror prevails in the camps. Those who are fleeing are set upon and done to death. There is no arrangement for their evacuation with safety."[6]

Gandhiji, on the other hand, was emphatic that it was better to perish to the last man bravely than desert the soil made sacred by the dust of one's forefathers. The pressure on him to go to the Punjab continued to grow.

Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru 29th August, 1947

Herewith is a letter from one Sardar Ajit Singh. You will see he is insistent on my going to the Punjab without a moment's delay. You will judge what I should do. Will it be any use my going after life and property are destroyed to the saturation point? Will it not be a mockery? I put before you for consideration the thoughts welling up within me. I have three wires pressing me to go.

Pandit Nehru wired back on the same day: "I still think that time has not come for you to visit the Punjab but feel your presence in Delhi very desirable so as to keep in touch with the Punjab situation and advise us."

On the following day the Sardar sent a further report but it was clear that neither he nor Pandit Nehru favoured Gandhiji's going to the Punjab just then: "Yesterday there was a meeting at Lahore. The result was satisfactory. Jinnah and other Leaguers were present. All resolutions were passed unanimously. But it will take time to put out the conflagration. From today Jawaharlal and Liaquat Ali have commenced touring the Punjab together. The tour will last for a

week. Others too have commenced touring similarly. Everybody is trying hard. The rest is in God's hands."

The note of complacency in the Sardar's letter disturbed Gandhiji. His colleagues did not seem to know what they were heading for. Gandhiji replied to the Sardar on the same day: "I have your letter. . . . May God give you the needed strength and the wisdom. Who could have thought you would have to face an ordeal like this so soon! His will be done."

A grave error of judgment was being committed.[7] Gandhiji did not wish to embarrass his colleagues by what they might consider unwanted interference. Nonetheless, he felt that he owed it to them to sound a final note of warning.

Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru 30th August, 1947

About my going to the Punjab, I won't move without your and Vallabhbhai's wish. I want to say, however, that everyday pressure is being put upon me to rush to the Punjab before it is too late. If you wish I would send you all that comes to me in that way so as to enable you to come to a true judgment.

If I am not going to the Punjab, would I be of much use in Delhi as an adviser or consultant? I fancy I am not built that way. My advice has value only when I am actually working at a particular thing. I can only disturb when I give academic advice as on food, clothing, the use of the military. The more I think, the more I sense the truth of this opinion. Left to myself, I would probably rush to the Punjab and if necessary break myself in the attempt to stop the warring elements from committing suicide. From a letter I just have from Lord Mountbatten I get the same impression. He would welcome my immediate going to the Punjab.

On this side I have work which must help you all.

Gandhiji's letters were redirected by Sardar Patel to Pandit Nehru who was touring both the Punjabs with Liaquat Ali Khan. What he saw there coupled, perhaps, with Lord Mountbatten's advice, at last decided him. He wired to Gandhiji on the 31st August: "Punjab problem overwhelming in extent and intensity. I feel now that your presence in Punjab is desirable and would be helpful in curing insanity and bringing solace to this ruined and heart-broken Province. I am returning to Delhi on 4th. After brief stay coming back to Punjab."

He followed it by another wire on the 2nd September: "I feel sure now that you should come to Punjab as early as possible."

The way was thus set clear for Gandhiji to proceed to the Punjab and repeat there the miracle that had been witnessed in Calcutta.

But as on so many previous occasions, Providence had yet another assignment in store for him and he, as always, was content to be as "clay in the hands of the Great Potter".

2

Ever since his departure from Noakhali in the first week of March, 1947, Gandhiji had maintained constant touch with his co-workers in Noakhali. To him Noakhali and Bihar still held the key to India's future. That was why he was so anxious to get back there as early as possible. In one of his letters to Kanu Gandhi from Delhi, in the second week of July, he wrote: "My body is here, my heart is in Noakhali." In another letter addressed to me he wrote: "It fills me with joy to read the accounts of your work. I would like to fly to you. But Kashmir calls me. After the Kashmir visit, I plan to come to Noakhali via Bihar. I almost feel like staying with you. But who knows what God has ordained?"[8]

At the same time we began to feel more and more the need for guidance by Gandhiji on the spot. After several ups and downs, the situation had begun to take a definite turn for the better, especially when the Bengal Chief Minister realised the necessity of winning the confidence of the Hindu minority to achieve his goal of United Sovereign Bengal. But after the acceptance of the partition plan, and the downfall of Suhrawardy, there was a distinct set back. The locals started a counter offensive and had the sympathy and support of the League elements in the Police and the services.

Satish Chandra Das Gupta in a letter to Shaheed Suhrawardy, dated the 4th of June, enclosed details of 177 cases of arson, loot and theft which he had reported to the Superintendent of Police. The latter had verbally promised that the Camp would be informed of the action taken on those cases, but no communication followed. "It appears," wrote Satish Chandra Das Gupta to the Bengal Chief Minister, "that the police and magistracy are helpless in the matter of stopping molestation of the Hindus by the Muslims or of bringing to book the offenders. . . . You may or may not be occupying the position you are holding today after the 15th of August, 1947. I write this so that you or your successor may assess the actual position."[9]

To the Superintendent of Police, Noakhali, he wrote: "I am sending you a copy of the letter which I have written to the Chief Minister. . . . 15th August is coming, but where is the joy . . . amongst the Hindus here? The same insecurity and consequent oppressive situation prevails. Although there is no likelihood of a flare up, still day-to-day life is intolerable to the Hindus as a community. Unless the League gives a lead . . . which the masses can understand, there

is no likelihood of a change of heart taking place by the 15th of August."[10]

The Superintendent of Police replied two days later: "With regard to the 177 cases, I write to inform you that each case was inquired into properly and necessary action taken. The results of the investigations are known to the complainants who lodged the information."[11]

The police chief's letter also contained the following: "I can now very well describe the condition of Noakhali as nothing but normal. You certainly cannot prove that the Hindus are still being oppressed and the condition of insecurity prevails anywhere in the district. If . . . there is still bitterness of feeling, it is due to the presence of the outside agencies working in the district. The volunteers have outlived their necessity and I should well advise them to withdraw now. . . . It is due to the presence of these volunteers' organisations that the neighbourly relation could not be re-established much earlier."

The denouement followed three days later when a notice was served on the Gandhi Camp to remove two of its best workers "from their present places of posting at once, otherwise the Superintendent of Police will take preventive action against them."

We decided to contact Mr. McInerny, the District Magistrate, about it. It was nearly nine o'clock at night when we reached Noakhali town after jeeping 22 miles. The road was soft as pulp and slippery, in parts flooded. The District Magistrate was as surprised to learn of the order in question as we had been to receive it. His subordinate had acted over his head. Even in matters of high policy, the District Magistrate complained, his orders were being flouted by his officials who, perhaps, felt a closer tie with the local pro-League elements than with the district representative of the discredited and outgoing Chief Minister of Bengal.

For form's sake he sent us to the police chief asking us to come to him afterwards and report. This we did. We challenged the Superintendent of Police to inquire into the allegations against our workers and if a single charge was found to be correct, not only would we remove the workers but we would wind up the Gandhi Camp itself. We insisted on retraction or substantiation of the charge *in toto*. The inquiry never came but the threatened action was "stayed".

On the 14th August, Mr. McInerny, who had made himself a *persona non grata* to the local Muslim leaders and their brother Muslim officers, was relieved of his charge as the District Magistrate and was informed that as from zero hour that day, his services were dispensed with.

On the 15th August, the Independence Day, we were returning from a meeting which we had held in one of the villages to observe it. Sitting on the arch of a bridge spanning one of the waterways was a

group of local Muslims, discussing the birth of Pakistan. One of them said to another: "Now that Pakistan has come, tell us friend, if this means that we shall get more rice or more cloth? If not, what good is Pakistan? . . . Last week we got only half the amount of gratuitous relief ration of rice and next week we won't get even that much. What shall we do with such Pakistan?"

Then hailing our boatman, as our boat passed under the bridge, one of them shouted: "Now, tell us brother, can you help us solve our bread problem? You Hindus are clever folk. May be you can help."

Our boatman, however, replied that he was only an illiterate, poor man like themselves. These questions were beyond him. And they all had a good-humoured laugh—not without a tinge of sombre dissatisfaction at the state of things.

My camp doctor, who was with us in the boat, took up the thread of the conversation. "So friends, Pakistan has come but you see the *khal* (canal) has not changed its course nor the old familiar road. Innocent lives have been lost, old ties snapped, mutual relations poisoned—and all for what? We used to tell you, and Mahatma Gandhi has been telling us, that rulers may come and rulers may go, but we common folk —Hindus and Muslims—have to live together and with our problems. Only our industry, resourcefulness, integrity and courage will help us solve them. Our problems—whether we are Hindus or Muslims—are the same, and only by our joint effort can they be solved. Mahatmaji has shown us how we can remove hunger and nakedness from our midst by our own effort. We and our camp are at your service. Come, brothers, by God's grace, if we work together we shall succeed."

Mian Ghulam Sarwar, who had been held in detention at Comilla since his arrest in October, 1946, was let out on "town bail" in July. After the 15th August, he was allowed to visit his headquarters at Shampur. The place was a few minutes' walk from my camp. My camp diary under the date 17th August, contains the following:

> Mian Ghulam Sarwar returned to Shampur yesterday, it is said, on a five day's parole. Two days are already gone and within the next three days he must report himself back at Comilla. So that is the way the wind is blowing. . . . A bird has whispered to me that Quasim Ali too has got "town bail" for Noakhali Sadar.

For a while both the ringleaders lay low. The following is again an excerpt from my camp diary of 21st August:

> He (Ghulam Sarwar) is still under police surveillance. But the police are very accommodating. They have asked people not

to go to see him in "large numbers". He himself told some of his friends in Shahpur Bazar . . . not to flock to him in their numbers as he was trying to secure his release and any demonstration on their part would frustrate that object.

Little by little the Mian Saheb and his machine became active. His agents began to put pressure on those who had lodged affidavits against him in connection with his part in the disturbances to make them withdraw their complaints. Complaints of harassment by his collaborator Quasim Ali too began to pour into our camp. Finally, a persistent campaign was set up—not without the encouragement and sympathy, if not actual collusion, of some of the police officials — against the Gandhi Camp itself.

The question of the prosecution and trial of those who had taken part in the disturbances and of the payment of relief and rehabilitation grants to the victims of the riots that were still pending had been hanging fire. An amount of Rs. 50,000 was still unpaid, according to a computation made by the Circle Relief Officer, in respect of one circle alone, the total amount outstanding for the whole district being computed at four lakhs of rupees. A report was received that the Special Relief Commissioner, who had been posted to Noakhali after the disturbances and who, by his sympathy and conscientious discharge of duty had won everybody's confidence, had opted for the Indian Union and therefore left Noakhali. This caused further uneasiness. Next we learnt that the Minister in charge of Civil Supplies, East Bengal, on his very first visit to the district headquarters, had declared that they had already done "more than enough" in regard to relief and rehabilitation and that the department for relief should be wound up forthwith.

Police Superintendent Abdullah had already been transferred from Noakhali in February, 1947. He had, however, from his new station continued to take interest in Gandhiji's peace mission and had kept up an intimate correspondence with him.

M. A. Abdullah to Gandhiji (Murshidabad) 11th Feb., 1947

I left Noakhali on the 3rd . . . went to Calcutta on the 7th . . . and took over charge of the district today. During my visit to Calcutta, I was told that I had been transferred because I did not take adequate preventive measures; my reply was that transfer is not an adequate punishment; there should be an open judicial inquiry. Some Calcutta Muslims told me that the Chief Minister got annoyed with me because I did not take action to prevent police and military "Juloom" (oppression) upon the Muslims and that Calcutta Muslims described me to the Chief Minister as "Congressi Abdullah, impressed by the presence of

Gandhi and become his convert . . . etc." Another source informs me that my difference and disagreement with some British officers were the real cause of my sudden transfer from Noakhali. So some Hindus, some Muslims and some Britishers attacked me; and the Government would not speak out the truth, and gave out different statements to different parties. I do not bother for such pettifogging highhandedness, as long as I am sure that my conscience is quite clear.

Gandhiji to M. A. Abdullah (Noakhali) 18th Feb., 1947

When all parties become displeased with one it is generally a sure sign of one's having done one's duty. May it be so with you.

M. A. Abdullah to Gandhiji (Murshidabad) 15th Feb., 1947

I miss here nothing except your valuable and instructive association, which I enjoyed so long at Noakhali. This district has a lot of historical backgrounds (monuments?) and I propose to pay visits to all of them in the near future. Noakhali was known for "perjury and forgery" and this district has the old historical legacy of "insincerity, hypocrisy and treachery"! I have been wondering how the world gets on when truth in almost all spheres of life has become such a rare phenomenon!

Gandhiji to M. A. Abdullah (Noakhali) 20th Feb., 1947

According to the letter under reply there is not much to choose between the two districts. I suppose a police officer, having to deal with crimes, will naturally spot first the weakness of the society to which he goes. It flatters me to think that you will miss my association in Berhampore. I am sure that that would be a temporary phase only, and in any case it can be well made up by correspondence.

In his letters Gandhiji used to address the ex-police chief of Noakhali as "Dear Abdullah Saheb". In his next letter "saheb" was replaced by "friend". It evoked the following from "friend" Abdullah: "Change of 'saheb' to 'friend' is a promotion to higher honour which I could hardly claim from the greatest man. Well, anything that comes from you pleases me, and I shall not squeak under the pressure of heavy honours. Your statement about 'vivisection' reminds me of the adage 'united we stand, divided we fall'."

A. Zaman, Additional District Magistrate, another Muslim colleague of Mr. McInerny, the District Magistrate, also had become an admirer of Gandhiji. He had been transferred to Calcutta. Later

he opted for the Indian Union. A letter he wrote to Gandhiji on 22nd April, before leaving Noakhali, ran:

> I would be failing in my duty if I did not acknowledge how much inspiration I received, in course of my . . . work in the riot-affected area from your presence and your kind advice on various problems that arose here. My efforts, of course, were very poor but I can assure you they were sincere and to the best of my abilities. . . .
>
> However, it is not for these matters that I write today. My letter is primarily a matter of thanks. These are due not only for the inspiration that you gave to (me in the course of) my official duties but the profound impression which discussions with you always produced on my mind. . . . I was growing cynical and never really believed that a really non-attached man can exist! I read the lines of the Gita "He before whom the world is not dismayed, and who is not dismayed before the world, who is void of joy, impatience, fear and dismay", or again, "He who rejoices not, grieves not, desires not, who renounces alike fair and foul, and has devotion is dear to me"; I never understood their real meaning till I came in contact with you.
>
> With the termination of the Secretary of States' services, I shall probably be a free man very soon. I have a desire to devote the rest of my life in studying religion, I mean comparative religion, and philosophy. I have a great desire to spend some time at your Ashram if you permit. I want to see for myself how in practice a good life is led.

All these officials had been associated with Gandhiji's Noakhali pilgrimage and been profoundly affected by him. They had been good friends to the Gandhi Camp. The situation began to deteriorate rapidly after their departure. We had to rethink our position. On the 21st August, I wrote to Satish Chandra Das Gupta: "I do not think we can make any headway with the present personnel in charge of the administration of the district till we can get into some kind of understanding with the Ministry. This means that for the time being we must observe a standstill attitude and wait for Bapu's arrival. After he has blazed the trail afresh for us, we shall see what we can make of it."

Partition had brought us to the end of the road on which Gandhiji had set us. We knew our bearings under the old set-up and the goal for which we had to make. What was to be our objective after partition and what reorientation in our policy would it necessitate? These were the questions that filled our minds. A cross section of our cogitations is furnished by the following from an earlier entry in my camp diary:

I feel there should be no more "high pressure" wooing (of the Muslims). We should work silently, steadily and unobtrusively and make our mark on East Pakistan's policies so as to take the sting out of the partition and sterilise its poison. In other words, we have to become unpaid, loyal servants of Pakistan and set the pace to others by our untiring labour of love in the service of both the communities and by our unflinching loyalty to the State. That does not mean we shall cease to be Satyagrahis. Our loyalty to Pakistan will be of the Satyagrahi variety, just as our loyalty to the Indian Union is tempered by our overall loyalty to the God of Truth. Not for the Satyagrahi "my country right or wrong". I expect Bapu's coming visit will be directed to the education of both Hindus and Muslims as well as the authorities in this new outlook.

For launching us on this phase of our mission and guiding our foot-steps, Gandhiji's presence became a matter of supreme importance to us. We were, therefore, very perturbed when we heard that local Muslim leaders were openly saying that Gandhiji would not be allowed to return to Noakhali. His continued detention in Calcutta added to our uneasiness.

There was another reason. In the middle of July, 1947, Colonel Jiwan Singh of the Indian National Army, who was working with us in Noakhali, reported after a tour of some districts in the East Punjab, where he had gone to visit his people, that every village, and almost every home in those parts was being turned into an arsenal. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were all feverishly preparing for a fight. Open traffic in firearms from military stores—including hand-grenades, Sten guns and Tommy guns—at fixed rates of commission by taciturn Gurkhas and happy-go-lucky British serving men had assumed scandalous proportions. I received several letters and a number of printed leaflets issued over the names of some local Muslim League organisations and Maulvis from my own home town in the West Punjab, exhorting Muslims to resort to murder, arson, abduction and loot against the Hindus and giving detailed instructions for the same. I passed them on to Gandhiji, and asked for advice. Was it not my duty to be with my own people in their testing time? What good would be my telling others to cultivate non-violence of the brave if my own people showed the white feather in the face of danger and set a humiliating example to others?

In reply Gandhiji wrote that a Satyagrahi could make no distinction between his people and others. "You have ceased to belong to Gujrat (West Punjab) just as I have ceased to belong to Porbandar. Even if the whole of Porbandar were to be reduced to ashes, I would not feel any special call to hurry there. The same should hold good in your case."[12]

In other words, one could not be at all places at the same time. By rushing from one place to another one would not be able to control the conflagration anywhere. But by sticking to one's post of duty, where Providence might have placed him, one could hope to make at least that place safe and thereby prevent the conflagration from becoming general. That was why, Gandhiji went on to add, he was so anxious to get back to Noakhali which was his natural post of duty, before the 15th August. And now it seemed that a general conflagration might break out in the Punjab while he was held up in Calcutta. What repercussion it would have on Noakhali and East Bengal, God alone knew.

It was, therefore, decided that two of us, Charu Chowdhury and myself, should meet Gandhiji at Calcutta, put before him our point of view and persuade him not to abandon his Noakhali visit. We left Noakhali on the 29th August and reached Calcutta on the 30th night.

3

To see the old familiar face and hear the old familiar voice after six months and more—during which the very tide of life had turned—was an overwhelming experience. The great moment was approaching. The progressively attenuating barrier that separated the striver from the full manifestation of the power of Ahimsa was about to be pierced. Gandhiji's outlook in that fateful juncture was one of intense expectancy like a scientist's on the eve of momentous experiment. If his hypothesis was correct, once the critical limit was crossed, a chain reaction of love or soul-force should be set up which would overcome all obstacles and to which there was no limit. (see Vol. I, pages 471-72). Would his hypothesis stand the test and become another landmark in his lifelong search or would it crumble under the test?

After a discussion with us, on the evening of the 31st August, Gandhiji announced that he would be leaving for Noakhali on the 2nd September, 1st September being Monday, his day of silence and rest. That evening, He who keeps watch when humanity's vision fails, gave the warning signal.

Charu and I had gone out to the city on business. When we returned to Hydari Mansion, it was past ten. We had expected to find everybody asleep. Instead we found the building in a blaze of light. Some youngsters at the gate tried to stop our car with "Who are you —Hindu or Muslim?"

We came out of the car. Chucking the leader, Charu said that children were expected to be in bed at that hour. "In Noakhali our boys show more maturity. We enforce strict discipline in Gandhi Camp."

The demonstrators had already broken their cordon in their eagerness to hear the dialogue and were clustering round us in a disorderly fashion. We brushed them aside and went in. Crowds were all over the place. Some rowdies were already inside the main hall. More were pouring in. It was only the next day that we were able to piece together the story.

A little before 10 o'clock, a man, heavily bandaged, had been brought to Gandhiji's residence by some excited young men at the head of a procession. How they got hold of him and who had engineered the demonstration will probably never be known. There were several conflicting versions. One was that he had fallen out of a tram car. Another was that he had been accosted by a drunken man on the street and asked to shout "Pakistan Zindabad". On his refusing to do so, a scuffle ensued resulting in some minor injuries. Some communally-minded fanatics, hearing of the incident, traced him to his residence where he was virtually pulled out of his bed. Still another version was that he had been stabbed by some Muslim in a Muslim locality. The assailant could not be traced. Later the Chief Minister, Dr. Prafulla Ghosh, had the victim of alleged stabbing examined. The doctor's report was that he bore no mark of stabbing. The details of injury, however, did not matter. What really mattered was that these young men had taken the law into their own hands and had assumed the role of judge, jury and executioner rolled into one.

Gandhiji had gone to bed. "This was about 10 p.m. (Calcutta time). They began to shout at the top of their voices. My sleep was disturbed but I tried to lie quiet, not knowing what was happening. I heard the window panes being smashed. I had . . . on either side of me two very brave girls (Abha and Manu). They would not (wake me up from my) sleep, but without my knowledge—for my eyes were closed—they went among the crowd and tried to pacify them. Thank God, the crowd did not do any harm to them."[13]

The entreaties of the two girls apparently had no effect on the rowdies. They began to smash furniture, picture frames and chandeliers with hockey sticks and by hurling stones. There were two groups —one trying to incite, the other to pacify the rowdies. The sensible section tried their best to protect the two girls and entreated them to go inside. One of Gandhiji's party was wearing pyjamas. He was mistaken for a Muslim and set upon.

To resume Gandhiji's narrative: "The old Muslim lady in the house endearingly called Bi Amma (mummy) and a young Muslim stood near my matting, I suppose, to protect me from harm. The noise continued to swell. Some had entered the central hall, and begun to knock open the many doors. I felt that I must get up and face the angry crowd. I stood at the threshold of one of the doors. Friendly faces surrounded me and would not let me move forward."[14]

The hefty Dr. Dinshah Mehta was in the house. But what could poor Dinshah do? He did not know the language. Besides, "even the strength of a Hercules could not have availed much in such circumstances."[15] Gandhiji's vow of silence admitted of his breaking it on such occasions. He addressed the rowdies : "What madness is this? Why do not you attack me? I offer myself for attack." He repeated it thrice and asked his Bengali grand-daughter-in-law to translate his words into Bengali. "All to no purpose. Their ears were closed against reason. I clasped my hands in the Hindu fashion. Nothing doing. More window panes began to crack."[16]

"Where is the rascal Suhrawardy?" shouted someone from among the crowd. "It seems they intended to lynch Suhrawardy. Luckily he was not in the house. He had gone home to get ready to start with me . . . for Noakhali. Not finding him, they turned their wrath on me. There was pandemonium."[17]

Just then two Muslim members of the household, with whom Gandhiji was staying, came rushing in, pursued by the infuriated crowd. One of them was bleeding profusely. He took shelter behind Gandhiji. Seeing him someone aimed a massive brickbat at him. It struck a Muslim standing by. A heavy stick narrowly missed Gandhiji's head and crashed against the opposite wall without hurting anybody. If it had hit Gandhiji, it would have been the end.

At last Gandhiji said in a husky voice: "My God asks me, 'Where do you stand?' I am deeply pained. Is this the reality of the peace that was established on the 15th August?"

Minutes later the police chief and his officers came in. They appealed to Gandhiji to retire. In an aside I requested them not to use force against the rowdies knowing how it would affect Gandhiji. After a time they succeeded in getting the building cleared of the crowd.

Gandhiji called Charu and me to him and said: "My resolve to go to Noakhali collapses after this. You will agree I cannot leave for Noakhali or for that matter for anywhere else in the circumstances. I would like you to think it over and then tell me. I do not know what God has in store for me next. But Noakhali seems to be just now out of the question."

Hardly was this talk finished when Dr. Prafulla Ghosh, the Chief Minister, arrived. He asked Gandhiji, "Shall we arrest Hindu Mahasabha leaders?"

Gandhiji: "No. Instead, you should put upon them the burden and responsibility of maintaining the peace. Ask them whether they want peace or fighting. Tell them you want their cooperation and wait for their reply."

It was half past twelve when Gandhiji went to bed. But the crowd outside lingered on in the streets till long after that. Ultimately the police had to use tear gas to disperse it. By the time quiet was

fully restored, it was half past one in the morning. Not till two o'clock could anyone go to sleep.

4

The news of the previous night's happenings had gone round the whole city with incredible speed and from early next morning a stream of anxious visitors began to pour in.

Charu Chowdhury and myself, fearing a very serious reaction in Noakhali if the Calcutta situation deteriorated further, decided, on our own, to approach Hindu Mahasabha leaders and plead with them for their cooperation in Gandhiji's and Shaheed Suhrawardy's peace effort.

We saw Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee first. He was suffering from acute gall-bladder trouble and had been ordered complete rest in bed. We told him that if the minority community in Noakhali, or for that matter in the whole of East Bengal, was not to be exposed to an incalculable risk, the situation in Calcutta would have to be immediately brought under control. He listened to us with the greatest attention. At the end he said: "I shall certainly issue an appeal and do anything beside that you might suggest." He asked us to come after an hour when he would be ready with his statement. He proved as good as his word. N. C. Chatterji, the other Hindu Mahasabha leader, was not at his residence. Dr. Mookerjee asked us not to worry; he would himself contact him.

When we returned to Hydari Mansion, we found Gandhiji writing a letter to Dr. Mookerjee to ask whether it was not time that he issued an appeal to the Hindus of Calcutta. His face lit up as I handed him Dr. Mookerjee's draft statement. With some minor changes it was released to the Press the next day:

> The continuance of peaceful conditions in West Bengal and East Bengal is essential for peace in India. Calcutta is the key to the situation. If it is at peace, it must influence East Bengal. Peace in the whole of Bengal must again affect the whole of the Punjab. . . . The majority community in Bengal must realise, the senseless oppression of innocent members of the minority community does not pay and creates a vicious circle which one cannot cut through. The united efforts of leaders of the communities must see to this.

At about two in the afternoon news came that a violent communal conflagration had broken out simultaneously in several parts of the city. Every ten minutes, fresh reports of incidents kept pouring in

and with every fresh report deeper grew Gandhiji's self-introspection. He used to have drink of fruit juice in the afternoon. That day when it was brought to him, he waved it away.

The day's news had created panic among the poorer Muslim inhabitants of Beliaghata who, on the strength of Gandhiji's previous assurances, had already returned to their homes. A batch of them boarded an open truck to go to the nearest Muslim locality. As the truck carrying them passed by the side of a graveyard near Gandhiji's residence, hand-grenades were hurled upon it from the roof of an adjoining building and two Muslims were instantaneously killed.

As soon as Gandhiji heard of the incident, he expressed a desire to go and see the victims. It was a piteous sight. The dead men lay in a pool of blood, their eyes glazed and a swarm of flies buzzing over their wounds. They must have been poor day-labourers. One of them was clad in a tattered *dhoti*. A four anna piece, which he carried on his person, had rolled out of his cloth and lay near his dead body. Gandhiji stood like one transfixed at the sight of this cold-blooded butchery of innocent men. While returning to his residence someone asked him if he was contemplating a fast.

"You are right," he replied. "I am praying for light. May be, by nightfall I shall get a clear indication."

Gandhiji to Sardar Patel 1st September, 1947

> Preparations for a fight are today in evidence everywhere. I have just returned after seeing the corpses of two Muslims who have died of wounds. I hear that conflagration has burst out at many places. What was regarded as the "Calcutta miracle" has proved to be a nine days' wonder. I am pondering what my duty is in the circumstances. I am writing this almost at 6 p.m. This letter will leave with tomorrow's post. I shall, therefore, be able to add a postscript to it. There is a wire from Jawahar that I should proceed to the Punjab. How can I go now? I am searching deep within myself. In that silence helps.

Abha had gone to visit her relatives in the city. She was able to return only at 6 p.m. with the help of the police. On the way her car was stoned. The report she gave of the disturbance was bad.

The evening prayer was held within doors. The hymn sung at the prayer was: "No-one has ever been known to be disgraced while walking the way of the Lord." The prayer was still in progress when Shaheed Suhrawardy with N. C. Chatterji and several leading Marwari businessmen came in. They all admitted that the Hindus had completely lost their heads.

A Marwari friend asked: "How can we help?"

Gandhiji: "You should go in the midst of the flames and prevent them from spreading or get killed in the attempt. A number of you are businessmen of long standing in the city. At least in the localities where you carry on your business your presence should tell. But in any case do not return alive to report failure."

"All this is the work of the Sikhs. They want to take revenge here for what is happening in the West Punjab."

"Whoever is responsible for it will regret it. They do not know what it will cost them. Well, it will be as God wills."

Even while he was speaking to these friends, he was asking himself the question, "Where do I come into this picture? Have I the right to give vicarious advice to others so long as I have not set the example myself?" Speaking aloud, he said: "I would like to rush into the midst of the maddened crowd. But if I tried to do that, everybody's attention would be diverted to me. . . . The fancied affection of the masses has thus shut that road to me. But the situation calls for sacrifice on the part of top rankers. Hitherto, with a couple of exceptions, the nameless rank-and-file have been the victims of the holocaust. . . . That is not enough."

After the visitors had left, he went out for his usual evening walk. Before he returned to the house, he knew what he should do.

The terrific mental strain had given him acute diarrhœa. He declined to have any food in the evening. It was foolish on his part, he said, to have taken any food even in the morning, when he was feeling mentally so upset. After taking a glass of hot water and glucose, he sat down to draft the statement embodying his decision.

When Rajaji came in at 10 p.m., Gandhiji showed him his draft. Glancing through it Rajaji, with his usual affectionate banter, remarked: "You don't expect me to approve of your proposed step." Together they took stock of the situation and thrashed threadbare the issues at stake.

Rajaji: "Can one fast against the goondas?"

Gandhiji: "I want to touch the hearts of those who are behind the goondas. The hearts of the goondas may or may not be touched. It would be enough for my purpose if they realise that society at large has no sympathy with their aims or methods and that the peace-loving element is determined to assert itself or perish in the attempt."

Rajaji: "Why not wait and watch a little?"

Gandhiji: "The fast has to be now or never. It will be too late afterwards. The minority community cannot be left in a parlous condition. My fast has to be preventive if it is to be of any good. I know I shall be able to tackle the Punjab too if I can control Calcutta. But if I falter now, the conflagration may spread, and soon I can see clearly, two or three Powers will be upon us and thus will end our short-lived dream of independence."

Rajaji: "But supposing you die, the conflagration would be worse."

Gandhiji: "At least I won't be a living witness of it. I shall have done my duty. More is not given to a man to do."

Rajaji capitulated.

In the draft Gandhiji had reserved to himself the liberty to add sour lime juce to water during the fast to make the water drinkable. He had developed a queer allergy to plain water ever since his first fourteen days' fast in South Africa. It brought on nausea.

Rajaji: "Why add sour lime juice to water if you are to put yourself entirely in God's hands?"

Gandhiji: "You are right. I allowed it out of weakness. It jarred on me even as I wrote it. A Satyagrahi must hope to survive his conditional fast only by the timely fulfilment of the terms of his fast."

And so the portion referring to the sour lime juice was scored out and the unadulterated venture of faith commenced. It was past eleven when Rajaji left with the final statement. It was released to the Press the same night. After referring to the disturbances at Hydari Mansion on the night of 31st August, it went on:

> What is the lesson of the incident? It is clear to me that if India is to retain her dearly-won independence, all men and women must completely forget lynch law. What was attempted was an indifferent imitation of it. . . . There is no way of keeping the peace in Calcutta or elsewhere if the elementary rule of civilised society is not observed. . . . The recognition of the golden rule of never taking the law into one's own hands has no exceptions. . . .
>
> From the very first day of peace, that is August 14th last, I have been saying that the peace might only be a temporary lull. There was no miracle. Will the foreboding prove true and will Calcutta again lapse into the law of the jungle? Let us hope not, let us pray to the Almighty that He will touch our hearts and ward off the recurrence of insanity.
>
> Since the foregoing was written . . . some of the places which were safe till yesterday (31st August) have suddenly become unsafe. Several deaths have taken place. I saw two bodies of very poor Muslims. I saw also some wretched-looking Muslims being carted away to a place of safety. I quite see the last night's incidents, so fully described above, pale into insignificance before this flare up. Nothing that I may do in the way of going about in the open conflagration could possibly arrest it.
>
> I have told the friends who saw me. . . what their duty is. What part am I to play in order to stop it? The Sikhs and the Hindus must not forget what the East Punjab has done during

these few days. Now the Muslims in the West Punjab have begun the mad career. It is said that the Sikhs and the Hindus (of Calcutta) are enraged over the Punjab happenings.

Now that the Calcutta bubble seems to have burst, with what face can I go to the Punjab? The weapon which has hitherto proved infallible for me is fasting. To put an appearance before a yelling crowd does not always work. It certainly did not last night. What my word in person cannot do, my fast may. It may touch the hearts of all the warring elements in the Punjab if it does in Calcutta. I, therefore, begin fasting from 8.15 tonight to end only if and when sanity returns to Calcutta. I shall, as usual, permit myself to add salt and soda bicarb to the water I may wish to drink during the fast.

If the people of Calcutta wish me to proceed to the Punjab and help the people there, they have to enable me to break the fast as early as may be.[18]

In a supplementary statement to the Press, Rajaji said that if trouble had not broken out in Calcutta, Gandhiji would have gone to the Punjab. It was in their hands to send him to the Punjab. "The women and children of the Punjab are eagerly looking forward to his presence in their midst and to the healing influence of his word and spirit. Let us send him with the laurels of victory round his aged brow to that afflicted Province."

5

After Rajaji had left, Gandhiji woke up Abha and Manu and told them that as from 8.15 that evening his fast had commenced. It would terminate only when the disturbances would cease. "It will be 'do or die'. Either there will be peace or I shall be dead."

The poor girls heard what they were told with a wild, vacant stare. Gandhiji pulled them up. "On you two is going to rest the responsibility of looking after me during the fast. You should eat and take rest as usual. If you do not keep yourself fit, you will not be able to do justice to your duty." That brought them down to the mother earth.

Gandhiji to Sardar Patel 2nd September, 1947

Since writing. . . yesterday, a lot more news has come. A number of people also have come and seen me. I was already pondering within me as to what my duty was. The news that I received clinched the issue for me. I decided to undertake a fast. It commenced at 8.15 last evening. Rajaji came last night. I patiently

> listened to all that he had to say. He exhausted all the resources of his logic. . . . But none of his arguments went down with me. . . . Let no-one be perturbed. Perturbation won't help. If the leaders are sincere, the killing will stop and the fast end, and if the killing continues what use is my life? If I cannot prevent people from running amock, what else is left for me to do? If God wants to take work from this body He will enter into the people's hearts, bring them round to sanity and sustain my body. In His name alone was my fast undertaken. May God sustain and protect you all. In this conflagration others will not be able to help much.

On receiving another wire from Pandit Nehru calling him to the Punjab, Gandhiji commented: "I now feel happy and at peace because I am doing what my duty requires of me." In answer to Pandit Nehru's wire, he worte:

Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru 2nd September, 1947

> I would have started for Lahore today but for the flare up in Calcutta. If the fury did not abate, my going to the Punjab would be of no avail. I would have no self-confidence. If the Calcutta friendship was wrong, how could I hope to affect the situation in the Punjab? Therefore my departure from Calcutta depends solely upon the result of the Calcutta fast. Don't be distressed or angry over the fast.

The second September dawned on a Calcutta still rocked by the disturbance. Peace brigades had begun patrolling the city from the previous night. Yet the conflagration showed no sign of abating.

Medical check up of Gandhiji by the nature-cure doctor, Dinshah Mehta, showed an average of 4 missing heart beats in 19 seconds, i.e. nearly every fourth beat—an indication of the terrific strain he was passing through. Dr. Dinshah told Gandhiji that he must take at least 4 lbs of water daily. "I shall try," Gandhiji replied. "But if Ramanama is in my heart, I should not need even the help of water. You see how peaceful I am today. Before this I could hardly sleep even at night."

A heavy downpour in the course of the day brought traffic in large parts of the city to a standstill. The rioting, however, continued. After massage, bath and warm water enema (the usual routine treatment that Gandhiji followed during his fasts), he slowly sipped 8 oz of plain, hot water. It took him fully one hour to do so.

As the day advanced, he began to betray symptoms of growing weakness. His voice sank. At half past one, after about an hour's rest, he again had 8 oz of hot water.

A co-worker brought news at noon that in Zachariah Street looting was widespread and furious firing was going on. Armed police had entered a mosque and were harassing the people who had taken shelter there. The distant sound of firing could be heard in the afternoon too.

Professor Nirmal Bose had been to see Sarat Chandra Bose. He returned with the report that the disturbances were largely the work of the Sikhs and the Biharis. Bengalis had readily joined them. Looting was in progress in different parts of the city. Firing was going on at many points though killing seemed to have stopped. A Muslim hotel had been set on fire near Sealdah railway station. At places the police were reported to be not doing their duty. In Sarat Bose's view, all this was not the work of ordinary hooligans. There was a plan and an organisation behind it. Sarat Bose even mentioned some names.

Dr. Prafulla Ghosh, too, seemed to be of the opinion that the Sikhs were largely responsible for what was happening. He suggested that a meeting of the representatives of all parties should be called to formulate the measures that should be taken to bring the situation under control. Gandhiji's statement should be printed in Hindi, Urdu and Bengali and widely distributed.

At quarter to four Gandhiji again had about 8 oz of cold water.

Soon after Sarat Bose came to see him. Ever since Gandhiji had ceased to back his move for a United Sovereign Bengal, he had nursed a grievance against Gandhiji. This was the first time that he had come to him since his arrival in Calcutta.

Gandhiji (laughing): "So, it needed a fast on my part to bring you to me?"

Sarat Bose: "I had a feeling that you no more cared for me. But I will not tax your strength. Are you permitted to talk?"

Gandhiji: "I have to, at least in pursuance of the object for which I am fasting."

Sarat Bose: "I have always been opposed to partition. I have never made any secret of my views. I am a frank man. I did not come before because, as I have already said, I had a feeling that you had not much use for me."

Gandhiji: "Representatives of all groups and parties have come and asked me why I did not send for you. Some of them said, they had a suspicion that the Forward Bloc (founded by Sarat Bose's younger brother Netaji Subhas Bose) people were behind the disturbances. I told them that Sarat Bose knows my door is always open to him. He will come whenever he thinks fit."

Gandhiji's remark opened up the old wound in Sarat Bose's heart.

> "That you have wrong'd me doth appear in this."

He poured out what had been rankling in his breast. "In your prayer

address you said I was spending money like water . . . in corrupt practices."

Gandhiji: "Was it not then your clear duty to come to me and remove my doubts—if they were ill-founded? It is the privilege of friendship to speak out one's mind unreservedly without the fear of being misunderstood. Otherwise what is friendship worth? Even *your* Suhrawardy (Sarat Bose's comrade-in-arms in his United Sovereign Bengal move and well known for his spendthrift habits) has said you spend money like water. But if you had a grievance on that score, why did you not contradict it publicly? Or you could have written to me. I would have then either explained to you what I meant, or you would have removed the misconception under which I was labouring. I would have then withdrawn my remarks. That was what true friendship demanded."

Sarat Bose: "Let bygones be bygones. What now is your complaint against the Forward Bloc?"

Gandhiji: "The Hindu Mahasabha people say Forward Bloc people are behind this holocaust. I owe it to you to place their allegation before you."

Sarat Bose: "You may believe it if you like. But I tell you, a number of Hindu Mahasabha people are behind this business. It is they who are inciting the Sikhs by telling them that it is unmanly on their part passively to look on while the Punjab is burning. I could even mention names."

Gandhiji: "Mutual recrimination will lead us nowhere. I am not here to judge. My fast is an appeal to everybody to search his heart. It should result in all-round self-purification. When the initial cleansing of the hearts has been effected, parties of Hindus and Muslims should go out together to patrol the troubled areas and relieve the police of its arduous duties. Or they should openly say they want to fight. What is the use of the Forward Bloc and the Hindu Mahasabha bandying words and engaging in mutual recrimination? How long can we carry on with the help of the police and the military?"

The conversation was here interrupted by the arrival of tea for Sarat Bose. His addiction to very strong tea was well known and was often the butt of good-natured jokes among his friends. Gandhiji twitted him: "The best use I would have for such tea would be to pour it down the drain." And then with a Puckish laugh and a merry twinkle in his eyes he added: "But, perhaps, you will retort that strong tea is better than weak independence!"

The allusion was to the differences between Sarat Bose and the Congress over the compromises which the Congress had entered into in the course of political negotiations with the British Government for the transfer of power. It had led to Sarat Bose's resignation from the Congress Working Committee.

This good-humoured fling at the Congress by one who was regarded as a partisan of the Congress relieved the tension that had marked the earlier part of their conversation.

Sarat Bose still smarting under Suhrawardy's reference to his prodigality, which Gandhiji had cited, had it back on his "renegade" ex-partner. Referring to Gandhiji's remark about the police and the military, which Suhrawardy had endorsed, he said: "The deterioration in Bengal set in with the introduction by Suhrawardy of armed police from the Punjab. Does he now want the British?"

Gandhiji ignoring the unfair innuendo against Suhrawardy patiently explained: "No, he did not say the British. He only said mixed. But there I have a bone to pick with him too. If the hearts of our volunteers could be cleansed, peace would immediately return. For that, cleansing of the hearts on the part of the leaders is necessary. Then alone will they be able to give the masses a clear lead. This today is lacking. You should first declare in unequivocal terms what you stand for and then back it by appropriate personal example. If in the course of it, some top-ranking leaders are killed, I will not grieve. On the contrary, I shall dance with joy. I told the same to some leading members of the Marwari community who came to seek my advice yesterday. Peace processions by themselves will be an empty show if the basic honesty of intention on the part of the leaders and the rank-and-file workers is not there. If such a volunteer organisation wedded to non-violence and ready to make the supreme sacrifice for the achievement of unity and peace begins functioning, I will not mind if the entire police force in the city is withdrawn. And *if in the result the whole of Calcutta swims in blood, it will not dismay me. For it will be willing offering of innocent blood. I know how to tackle such a situation. You and I shall then have to rush barefoot in the midst of the flames and work without respite day and night till either peace is restored or we are all dead. That is my conception of a peace mission—not a mealy-mouthed, milk-and-water business.* I do not care if I am alone in these thoughts. Enough unto me is my faith. I shall be content if I get honest and whole-hearted cooperation of you all in this work. We shall then be able to control the situation in the Punjab too."

In an introspective vein he proceeded : "I had the authorities withdraw the armed police guard that was posted at my residence. Unfortunately, it has again come back. I have suffered it to remain not for mine but Suhrawardy's sake. He feels nervous. If on the night of the 31st August, he had not luckily gone out to get ready for the journey to Noakhali, who knows what might have happened to him, and consequently to me?"

Nostalgically he ruminated: "I have often asked why there should be any further trouble now that the League and Jinnah have got what they wanted. If only Jinnah had accepted my offer embodied

in the Rajaji formula, all this could have been avoided. . . . I was prepared to go even further. If after the British had quitted, the collective wisdom and statesmanship of India were still unable to achieve a peaceful solution, I would have invited the Muslim League to take charge of the Government. The Congress Ministers would have made way for them if I had asked them to. *Pandit Nehru and the Sardar had told me that they would carry out my orders if I took over command.*"

While the interview was still in progress, Dr. Prafulla Ghosh with some of his colleagues came in. Saying, "I shall endeavour to do my best on your lines for the establishment of peace," Sarat Bose rose and departed.

"You have been very unfair to the Ministry in undertaking the fast without taking them into your confidence," Dr. Ghosh complained.

Gandhiji: "Perhaps you are right. But the conflagration was spreading so fast that every moment counted. Any avoidable delay would have meant further loss of innocent lives."

Over an hour's talk with deep passion without intermission had begun to tell upon Gandhiji. Dr. Ghosh had not failed to notice this.

Dr. Ghosh: "I do not wish to prolong the argument."

Gandhiji: "That is just like you. I had expected of you nothing less."

Dr. Ghosh: "One thing, however, strikes me. You have launched your fast at a time when a section of the Hindus have begun to look upon you as their enemy. They foolishly feel that by asking them to practice non-violence, when the other side has shed all scruples, you are being very unfair to them. I would have had nothing to say if you had declared a fast for anything wrong that the Ministry did."

Gandhiji: "All this is wide of the mark. Don't you see, this now gives me the right to fast against the Muslims, too. My fast is intended to serve both the communities. The moment the Hindus realise that they cannot keep me alive on any other terms, peace will return to Calcutta."

Dr. Ghosh: "Your fast weighs down on us more than anything else. How can we effectively set to work under the heavy weight of your fast?"

Gandhiji: "It is a wrong way of looking at the thing. My fast is intended to strengthen your hands and to spur everybody to greater activity. You will be done for if you regard it as an oppression."

Suhrawardy intervening said: "Already Hindus and Muslims are feeling the pressure. Let us call their representatives together and confer with them at the earliest opportunity."

Dr. Ghosh replied that he had already invited the representatives of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs to meet him the next day. "Should it be here or at my residence?" he asked.

"Not here but at the Chief Minister's residence," suggested Suhrawardy with deliberate courtesy.

Gandhiji supported Shaheed's suggestion. A preliminary conference should be held at the Chief Minister's residence. Afterwards all or a few out of them could come to him, if necessary. "That was also the procedure followed at the time of my twenty-one days' fast at Delhi in 1924."

Dr. Ghosh told Gandhiji of the stringent action his Ministry had already taken in regard to the Press. Any paper indulging in inflammatory propaganda would summarily be suspended.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee was the next to come. He was accompanied by some other Hindu Mahasabha leaders. Before he could say anything, Gandhiji made solicitous inquiries about his health. This concern for him, by one who was himself fasting, touched Dr. Mookerjee deeply.

Dr. Mookerjee: "The general feeling here now is in favour of peace. But there is danger of a delayed repercussion in East Bengal. The news from Dacca is disturbing. There may be a flare up there any moment."

Gandhiji: "It is inevitable if the situation here does not improve immediately."

Dr. Mookerjee: "From tomorrow Hindusthan National Guards (of Hindu Mahasabha) will be patrolling the streets along with the Muslim National Guards."

Shaheed: "The bulletins about Gandhiji's health ought to be more widely publicised. His fast must be terminated within two days."

Gandhiji: "I will break my fast when Dr. Mookerjee reports that all is quiet in Calcutta—not before that."

In the evening it again rained heavily. One of his party asked Gandhiji whether if he died in the course of the fast, it would not plunge the whole country into conflagration. Gandhiji replied that this was possible. "But before that happens, I shall be in the presence of my Maker."

"Supposing peace is established now but is broken afterwards when your fast is terminated?"

Gandhiji: "In that event I shall enter on an unconditional fast unto death. It will not be recalled even if peace is established. I would not in that event take even water. For I would not wish to be a living witness to both truth and Ahimsa being made a mock of."

* * *

Here I must pay tribute to Suhrawardy for the grace and dignity with which he bore himself in that juncture. He showed to far better advantage now that he was down and out than did in their glory some of those who had recently succeeded him in office. The following dialogue took place outside Gandhiji's room between Shaheed and a couple of Congress leaders, one of them a member of the West Bengal Cabinet.

Shaheed: "I telephoned to you to pick me up on your way while coming here, as I had no transport. But you did not. If I had been you, I would never have failed to oblige."

Congressman (citing an instance): "You did once when you were Chief Minister."

Shaheed: "So you remember it! Let me, however, tell you that I have not the slightest recollection. Since you are positive, all I can say is there must have been some misunderstanding. It is contrary to my nature."

The ex-Chief Minister had undoubtedly much to answer for. The record of his recent past was mercilessly cast in his teeth by those who had suffered under his regime. Unkindest things were said without ceremony to his face. He took it all in a sportsman-like spirit. It was a part of the game. He had to live down his past.

6

On the 3rd September, the second day of the fast, when Dr. Dinshah Mehta saw him in the morning, Gandhiji reported that he had had a very peaceful night both physically and mentally. "I am not at all anxious to terminate my fast. At this rate though the body might become weaker and weaker I feel I could go on even for one month."

Dr. Mehta (misunderstanding Gandhiji's meaning): "Yes, if you can take that much amount of water there will be no difficulty."

Gandhiji : "What I meant to say was that I have a feeling of the presence of God within me this time as never before. . . . If Ramanama has fully penetrated my heart, I am sure, I shall not need to drink even water to survive."

Blood pressure was 154/89—Gandhiji's optimum and normal for his age. He then had his routine treatment. During massage he had, as usual, his daily Bengali lesson. Someone brought a report that looting had continued till midnight. But since then it had been all quiet.

Gandhiji: "No wonder, the looters also needed rest after the full day's work!"

In answer to a question by one of his companions, he remarked that he hoped that the fast would not extend beyond "even ten days". The heart of the hooligans was sure to melt. "It has happened before. I know the hooligans class well. I have lived in their midst."

The director of a leading Calcutta daily asked permission to have a photograph of his taken. "It will help us in our peace work," he pleaded. Gandhiji turned down the suggestion, saying that he did not want to end his fast by a momentary appeal to the people's emotions through the display of his photograph but only as a result of true

repentance and heart-unity among the Hindus and Muslims.

* * *

Communal frenzy exacted its toll of sacrifice from two workers who dared to live up to the creed of non-violence, before it could be controlled. Sachin Mittra, aged 38, a Master of Arts of Calcutta University, a seasoned Satyagrahi and a lover of Khadi, was a trusted worker under Thakkar Bapa in the Noakhali peace mission. Gifted with a keen aesthetic sense and amiable nature, he had endeared himself to all his companions. On the 1st September, on hearing of the conflagration in the city, at the invitation of a few Muslim friends, he set out with them in the direction of Nakhoda mosque, which was reported to be a danger spot. At the crossing of the Chitpur Road and Canning Street, the party was surrounded by a hostile Muslim crowd. The Muslim rowdies separated Sachin and his Hindu colleagues from their Muslim comrades. Sachin was stabbed and his Hindu colleagues severely assaulted. Their Muslim comrades tried to protect them but were overpowered and some of them sustained injuries. Sachin Mittra was removed to the hospital where he succumbed to his wounds—a victim of fanatical fury which obliterates all distinction between friend and foe and in its deluded ignorance strikes down the very hand that was thrown out to protect it.

The other worker who paid with his life was Smritish Bannerjee. Of like age as Sachin Mittra, on learning that a peace procession of schoolboys and girls was in danger, he rushed to the danger area. What followed precisely is not known. But a little later when the procession was attacked, he was seen with a blood-stained shirt trying to escort some girls to a place of safety. Later his body was brought to the hospital with five mortal stab wounds on his body.

Gandhiji refused to mourn the two deaths. In a Hindi note to Angshu Rani Mittra, the widow of Sachin Mittra, he wrote: "Pyarelalji has just given me the news that your husband who was mortally stabbed in the course of protecting others has succumbed to his wounds today. Do not let this be an occasion for sorrow but only for joy. Sachin has become immortal. You must not grieve but lose yourself in service in emulation of him."

At midday a group of ladies came. They wanted the dead body of Sachin Mittra to be taken out in a procession. Gandhiji deprecated the idea, saying he hated too much being made of the physical body. "If anybody tried to take out my body in a procession after I died, I would certainly tell them—if my corpse could speak—to spare me and cremate me where I had died."

After the ladies had left, a phone message from Rajaji came that the students of Calcutta had thrown themselves into an all-out effort for the establishment of peace. They had adopted the slogan

"hooliganism not wanted". This was followed by a phone call from Sarat Bose, anxiously inquiring after Gandhiji's condition and assuring him that he was doing his best to restore peace.

From outside could be heard the shouting of slogans by peace processions. But a Muslim friend came in a little later and reported that five persons had been killed and four wounded as a result of firing from a hospital. Gandhiji could send someone to verify it. Gandhiji replied that this was unnecessary. That was the very reason why he was fasting. The Muslim friend became nervous and requested him to give up the fast. "God forbid—if anything should happen to you, it will be the end of us Muslims."

Gandhiji: "Please do not try to persuade me in this manner to give up my fast."

At half past six in the evening a mixed procession of Hindus and Muslims issued forth from Beliaghata intent upon seeing Gandhiji. After some parleying, two Hindu and two Muslim representatives from among them were allowed to come in and see him. One of the Muslims, a prominent member of the Bengal Muslim League, with tears in his eyes entreated him to give up the fast. "I worked with you during the Khilafat movement. I undertake that no Muslim in this area will again disturb the peace. Your mere presence in our midst is an asset to us. It is the guarantee of our safety. Do not deprive us of it."

Gandhiji: "My presence did not check the rowdies the other day. My word seems to have lost its power so far as they are concerned. My fast will now be broken only when the conflagration ends and the glorious peace of the last fifteen days returns. If the Muslims really love me and regard me as an asset, they can demonstrate their faith by refusing to give way to the instinct of revenge and retaliation even if the whole of Calcutta goes mad. In the meantime, my ordeal must continue."

The Hindu representatives also gave a similar assurance and promised to live in peace with their Muslim neighbours. "The leaven has begun to work," Gandhiji remarked. But it was not enough, he added. Not till the condition which he had laid down was fulfilled in the letter and in spirit, he told the deputation, would he give up the fast. To give it up prematurely from a desire to live would be a denial of God. He asked the deputation, instead, to work for peace with still greater will and determination.

The friends retired with a heavy heart. Added Gandhiji after they had left: "Let the evil-doers desist from evil, not to save my life, but as a result of a true heart-change. Let all understand that a make-believe peace cannot satisfy me. I do not want a temporary lull to be followed by a worse carnage. If that happens, I shall have to go on an unconditional fast unto death."

At quarter past seven in the evening, Rajaji brought the report

that in contrast with the previous day, the city was markedly peaceful and volunteers as well as the police were giving effective protection to the members of both the communities. Dr. Prafulla Ghosh with some other Congress workers and leaders came a little later. Gandhiji told them that no high pressure tactics should be used to save his life. He wanted to live only as a result of a spontaneous and genuine unity of hearts among the people. Failing that he would prefer death. "Death alone is our true friend. Why should we be afraid of it?"

7

Thursday, the 4th September, and the third day of the fast, dawned with Gandhiji still weaker. The voice had sunk to a mere whisper, the pulse was small and rapid. There was a feeling of giddiness on getting up and a buzzing sound in the ears.

To Gandhiji's delight his Noakhali friend, Police Superintendent Abdullah turned up. "What a curious coincidence!" remarked Gandhiji to him. "I was thinking of you, and wondering how we could meet and here you are!"

This was their last meeting. Abdullah returned to East Pakistan soon after. But neither time nor distance could weaken the bond that had grown up between them. After Gandhiji's death, among the first contribution to be received for the fund that was raised to honour his memory was a cheque for Rs. 1000 from the Police Superintendent Abdullah.

After a few minutes pleasant chat with him Gandhiji began editing the next issue of *Harijan*. This he continued to do throughout his fast.

Then the miracle happened. As the leaden hours crept by and slowly life ebbed out of the frail little man on the fasting bed, it caused a deep heart churning in all concerned, bringing the hidden lie to the surface. People came and confessed to him what they would have confided to no mortal ear. Hindus and Muslims combined in an all-out effort to save the precious life that was being offered as ransom for disrupted peace between brother and brother. Mixed processions, consisting of all communities, paraded through the affected parts of the city to restore communal harmony.

At midday a party of twenty-seven people from central Calcutta came and saw Gandhiji. They were members of what had come to be known as "resistance groups" that had sprung up as an answer to hooliganism during and after the Muslim League Direct Action in 1946. They were said to be in control of the turbulent elements in the city. Admitting that they had taken part in the killing, they begged for forgiveness and requested him to give up the fast. Their faces wore a penitent look, not unmixed with shame. They gave an undertaking

that they would immediately bring the trouble-makers under control. They said they had already traced and put under restraint the ring-leaders, who had organised the rowdy demonstration in Hydari Mansion on Sunday last, including the person who had hurled the stick that had narrowly missed hitting him. (Later the assailant came to Gandhiji and asked to be forgiven). They would all surrender themselves to him and take whatever punishment he might mete out to them. Would not Gandhiji on the strength of that assurance now break his fast? "We shall then be able to go to work unburdened by the oppression of the fast." If not, what was Gandhiji's condition for breaking the fast?

But Gandhiji felt himself unable to accede to their request. He told them he would break his fast only when his instinct told him that stable peace had been established in the city. They would have to assure him that there never would be a recrudescence of communal madness in the city even though the whole of West Bengal, and for that matter India, went up in flames. The Muslims should be able to tell him that they now felt safe and, therefore, he need not prolong his fast. He did not expect them to be able to control all the goondas in the city—though he would love it if they could be controlled—as he had not yet attained the requisite degree of purity, detachment and steadfastness of mind for such a consummation. But if he could not even get them to purge themselves of the communal virus, he would feel that life was not worth living and he would not care to prolong it. They had referred to their sense of oppression on account of his fast. Why should they have such a feeling if what they had told him came from their hearts? "If any step is taken under the pressure of my fast, not from conviction, it would, of course, cause oppression. But there should be no oppression if there is complete cooperation between the head and the heart. The function of my fast is to purify our hearts and intellect and to release our energies by overcoming our mental sluggishness, inertia, not to paralyse us or render us in-active. My fast isolates the forces of evil; the moment they are isolated they die, for evil by itself has no life. I expect you, therefore, to work with even greater vigour under the instigation of my fast, not to feel its oppression."

The deputation went back realising that unless they could deliver the goods it was not fair to ask him to give up the fast. At two in the afternoon another noted ringleader came. He was known to have been behind the disturbances in Burra Bazar. Making a clean breast of it, he promised that by that evening all weapons would be surrendered to Gandhiji. In the meantime he had detailed two of his boys for the protection of each Muslim shop in the area. Later in the afternoon a third band of hooligans came to Gandhiji. Included in them were those who had led the disturbances in his camp on Sunday night. They made their surrender with what appeared to be genuine

contrition. Their leader made a full and unreserved confession and said: "I and the whole party under me will gladly submit to whatever penalty you may impose, only you should now end your fast."

"My penalty for you," said Gandhiji, "is that you should go immediately among the Muslims and assure them full protection. The moment I am convinced that real change of heart has taken place, I will give up the fast. Let me tell you I am as anxious to end the fast as you, as I want to proceed to the Punjab at the earliest. That is what is sustaining me in my ordeal. But if you do not now hurry up it may be too late. I cannot last for many more days."

The stream of visitors continued till five in the evening. At half past five a note came from Rajaji. The tension had ceased in the city, he reported. All was now quiet. He would come to see him at night. At 6 p.m. when Gandhiji, who had dozed off for a while, woke up, a deputation of the citizens of Calcutta representing all communities waited on him. Included in it were Shaheed Suhrawardy, N. C. Chatterji and Sardar Niranjan Singh Talib. They told him that they had been to all affected parts of the city and there was quiet everywhere. They would hold themselves responsible for anything untoward that might happen thereafter. They had every reason to hope that there would be no recrudescence of trouble which they maintained was "really not communal" but "the work of the goondas". They requested him to terminate his fast.

After some reflection Gandhiji spoke. He deprecated the suggestion that the outbreak of violence was not communal in character but really the work of the goondas. "It is we who make the goondas and we alone can unmake them. Goondas never act on their own. By themselves they cannot function." It was the cowardice or passive sympathy of the average citizen or "the man with a stake" that gave the so-called goondas the power to do mischief. "My fast should make you more vigilant, more truthful, more careful, more precise in the language you use. You have all come here out of affection for me to ask me to give up my fast. The ringleaders also have been to see me and have apologised for what they have done. But before I can accede to your request, I want to ask you two questions: (1) Can you in all sincerity assure me that there never will be repetition of trouble in Calcutta? Can you say that there is a genuine change of heart among the citizens so that they will no longer tolerate, much less foster communal frenzy? If you cannot give that guarantee, you should rather let me continue this fast. It won't hurt me. When a man fasts like this, it is not the gallons of water he drinks that sustains him but God; and (2) If trouble breaks out—since you are not omnipotent or even omniscient—would you give me your word of honour that you would not live to report failure but lay down your life in the attempt to protect those whose safety you are pledging?

You should remember, too, that if you break your pledge after giving it to me, you will have to face an unconditional fast unto death on my part. I do not wish to live in a fool's paradise. If you deceive me, if you say one thing and mean another in your heart, my death will be upon your head. I want a clear and straight answer. Your assurance must be in writing."

He spoke with deep passion. In the silence that followed one could have heard a pin drop. Shaheed Suhrawardy was the first to speak. "You had said that you would break the fast when Calcutta returned to sanity. That condition has already been fulfilled. In asking us to give a guarantee for the future are you not imposing a fresh condition?" he asked.

Characterising Shaheed's argument as "legalistic" Gandhiji replied that no fresh condition was being imposed. All that was implied in the original terms of the fast. "What I have spoken now is only a home truth to make you know what is what. If there is complete accord between your conviction and feeling, there should be no difficulty in signing that declaration. It is the acid test of your sincerity and courage of conviction. If you sign it merely to keep me alive, you will really be compassing my certain death."

"In such a big city," Shaheed interposed, "things may happen in spite of our best effort. Surely, you cannot fast for any stray incident that may happen?"

Gandhiji explained to Shaheed that he had missed his point. He did not mean that Calcutta would become completely free from all crime for good. All he meant was that even if madness should seize the whole country, Calcutta would not lose its head."

Everybody realised the solemnity of the warning and their own responsibility. Rajaji and Acharya Kripalani, who had arrived during the latter part of the discussion, proposed that they might leave Gandhiji alone for a little to confer among themselves. Just then an appeal signed by some 40 representatives of the Hindu and Muslim residents of Narkeldanga, Sitalatala, Maniktola and Kankurgachi areas was brought in. The signatories pledged themselves that they would not allow any untoward incident to happen in those localities—the worst affected during the previous riots. "It may also be reported for his information that no incident occurred in these mixed areas since the 14th August, 1947." They earnestly prayed to Gandhiji to break his fast.

"So our effort has not been in vain," Shaheed commented as he read out the appeal.

"Yes, the leaven is at work," replied Gandhiji.

The leaders then retired to the next room for consultation and remained there for nearly half an hour.

The strain of speaking had utterly exhausted Gandhiji. Suddenly

he felt giddy. Tossing about restlessly in his bed he began to recite Ramanama.

In the deliberations that took place in the adjoining room Suhrawardy was cautious and circumspect, which bespoke his sincerity and sense of responsibility; Acharya Kripalani cynical and full of sardonic humour as ever; Rajaji tactful and persuasive and full of practical wisdom, concealing his deep emotion under a mask of cold logic. The discussion was brief but unhurried. Rajaji dictated the draft of the pledge which was signed first by N. C. Chatterji and D. N. Mukherjee of the Hindu Mahasabha, followed by Shaheed Suhrawardy as the leader of the Muslim League Parliamentary Party of West Bengal, R. K. Jaidka, the Punjabi leader and Niranjan Singh Talib, the Sikh leader. Without any further loss of time the signatories returned to Gandhiji.

The document ran: "We the undersigned promise to Gandhiji that now that peace and quiet have been restored in Calcutta once again, we shall never allow communal strife in the city and shall strive unto death to prevent it."

"But, Sir, is it any good my signing this document?" remarked Shaheed to Gandhiji. "I may any time be called to Pakistan and then what happens to my pledge?"

"You must in that event have confidence that those whom you leave behind will deliver the goods," replied Gandhiji. "Moreover, you can come back."

Before breaking the fast, Gandhiji addressed a few words to the gathering in Hindustani: "I am breaking this fast so that I might be able to do something for the Punjab. I have accepted your assurance at its face value. I hope and pray I shall never have to regret it. I would certainly like to live to serve India and humanity, but I do not wish to be duped into prolonging my life. I hope I will not have again to fast for the peace of Calcutta. Let me therefore warn you that you dare not relax your vigilance. Calcutta today holds the key to the peace of the whole of India. If something happens here, its repercussion is bound to be felt elsewhere. You should, therefore, solemnly resolve that even if the whole world went up in a blaze, Calcutta would remain untouched by the flames. You have just heard the song 'Ishwar and Allah are Thy names.' May He be witness between you and me."

Seventy-three hours after it was commenced, Gandhiji broke the fast at 9.15 p.m. on the 4th September by slowly sipping a glass of diluted orange juice. It was preceded by a short prayer, in which all present joined, followed by the singing of Tagore's song,

> "When the heart is hard and parched up,
> Come upon me with a shower of mercy"

and Ramadhun. Orange juice was handed by Shaheed Suhrawardy, who bowed at his feet and wept.

A truck load of hand-grenades and arms had in the meantime arrived to be surrendered to Gandhiji as a token of repentance on the part of those who had taken part in the savagery of reprisals and counter-reprisals.

Before the leaders had dispersed, Gandhiji called Rajaji to his side and said, "I am thinking of leaving for the Punjab tomorrow."

Rajaji was in a fix. If the idea took hold of Gandhiji, it would be difficult to dislodge him from it. Suhrawardy tactfully came to the rescue: "Sir, you cannot leave Calcutta without giving the citizens of Calcutta an opportunity to join you in a public prayer and thanksgiving. If we tried tomorrow, it would be simply impossible to control the delirious crowd. At the earliest it can be on the day after tomorrow." Others supported him. They did not tell him what was uppermost in their minds, namely, that they were deeply concerned about his undertaking a thousand-mile railway journey—within 24 hours of his breaking the fast—with enthusiastic crowds all along the line.

At half past ten at night another group came to surrender unlicensed weapons. Gandhiji said to those who had brought them: "The surrender should be without regret."

"We have no regret," they all answered together.

The next day—5th September—still another dump of country-made arms—guns, swords, daggers and cartridges—was similarly surrendered.

Suhrawardy came at midday. Their joint mission had ended. What were Gandhiji's orders for him next?—he asked.

Gandhiji : "If your conversion is sincere, do not again let yourself be tempted by power."

At the evening prayer gathering on the 6th September, Gandhiji repeated the warning he had given to the leaders at the time of the breaking of his fast. Suhrawardy after seconding Gandhiji's appeal announced that he would be joining Gandhiji in his Punjab mission, too. He had put himself unreservedly under Mahatmaji's orders. Thereafter he would carry out his biddings.

On the 7th September, Gandhiji's last day in Calcutta, at half past eight at night, some ladies came to bid him farewell by performing *arti*—the centuries-old ceremonial Hindu way of expressing devotion. The ceremony consists of waving lights fed with pure *ghee* round the head of the object of adoration. As they approached him bearing the salver on which the lights were placed, he stopped them. "Put out the lights, drain every drop of *ghee* into a vessel and distribute it to the poor," he said.

At 9 p.m. he boarded the train for Delhi at Belur—a wayside station—where he was taken to avoid the crowds at the Howrah

station. Among those who saw him off were the Chief Minister of West Bengal with his fellow-Ministers and Shaheed Suhrawardy. Reverentially they took leave one after another. As the train started, Suhrawardy's eyes were seen wet with tears—perhaps for the first time in his life in public like that.

8

My sister was to have arrived in Calcutta from the Wah camp on the same evening on which Gandhiji broke his fast, arrangements for the evacuation of that camp having been made. But duty required us to be back in Noakhali. Without stopping for the completion of the ceremonial breaking of the fast, Charu Chowdhury and I hurried to the station to catch the Dacca Mail with a letter from Gandhiji for Khwaja Nazimuddin, the Chief Minister of East Bengal, in our pocket. The strains of Tagore's song and Ramadhun were ringing in our ears as, in the gloaming we hurried past trucks loaded with unlicensed arms that had just arrived to be surrendered to Gandhiji.

Gandhiji to Nazimuddin 4th September, 1947

> This will be presented to you by Pyarelalji. . . .You may know that Satish Babu and some inmates of Khadi Pratisthan, together with the helpers whom I brought with me from Delhi, were posted in Noakhali to help the terror-struck and demoralised Hindus and, if possible, to prevent them from running away from Noakhali. . . . In doing so, I felt that I was serving the Muslims, too, of Noakhali, though they stood in no need of help from me. But on reaching there I found that I could be of some help to them also. I had announced that I would do or die in Noakhali in the sense that I would prefer to die there unless through what I could do, the two communities should become friends. Meantime, there came a call from Bihar . . . and I hurried to Bihar, this time to help the Muslims of whom large numbers had already fled to Bengal, Sind and other Muslim-majority parts. Since then I have not been able to return to Noakhali. When at last I came to Calcutta on the 9th ultimo, I found myself caught by Shaheed Saheb and here I am. The sequel you know.
>
> I am dictating this letter from my bed. Everybody consoles me by saying that the first 15 days of peace will soon return. If so, I may be able to break my fast early enough to enable me to resume my work forthwith. I have an urgent call from both parts of the Punjab, which have gone, in my opinion, utterly mad. Meanwhile, I would like you to tell me all about Noakhali.

Pyarelalji will tell you all about it from my point of view. . . . I know that you have become Premier of East Bengal at a most critical period. May God help you.

Next day, in the afternoon, we met Khwaja Nazimuddin at Dacca. "I am new to the post. I have not had yet time to acquaint myself fully with the facts of the situation," he said to us. He was eager to hear all we had to tell him. In regard to matters with financial implications, e.g. payment of pending relief grants to the victims of disturbances, the Premier was non-committal. The Government were experiencing acute financial stringency, he said. He would have to consult his Finance Minister. But he promised to set about it immediately and do his best.

In regard to complaints about harassment of the minority community, he seemed to take a rather complacent view. Such occurrences had "always been common" in Noakhali, "but nobody thought much of them before." But he agreed with us that the bad past could not serve as a precedent for the future and, in view of what had happened of late, every effort should be made to put an end to such happenings. He asked for lists of "dangerous characters". We suggested to him that he should send for and ask his ex-Superintendent of Police of Noakhali, Abdullah, now in the Anti-Corruption Enforcement Branch, and the ex-District Magistrate, Mr. McInerny, who was still in Noakhali, engaged in flood relief work. He said he would do that. If necessary he would send for us again.

We told him about the dead-set that was being made upon our camp by local Muslim League elements. "Have you been going out at any time accompanied by the police or the military?" he asked. "Noakhali Muslims are very sensitive to that. Do your men carry weapons—sticks for instance?" "Never," I replied. "We have scrupulously kept clear of both the police and the military. As for weapons, no weapons are allowed in our camp. Personally I, as a rule, venture forth all alone and do not even carry a lantern at night when I go out."

He wanted to know all about our camp, the nature of our activities and our objective. We told him our activities were directed to rendering service to both the communities in order to bring them together in a common bond of friendship and heart-unity. Our goal was self-liquidation, i.e., to wind up and go as soon as both the local Hindus and Muslims assured us that communal peace was no longer in jeopardy and they would be able to stand on their own feet. He suggested that we should seek the cooperation of some local Muslim League leaders, whom he named. We narrated to him the story of our unsuccessful effort to woo them in the past. We made a sporting offer: "Let the Muslim League detail some trusted workers of theirs

to open an office on the premises of our camp to watch our activities and satisfy themselves whether we are actuated by any other motive than that of service and carrying out of Gandhiji's mission of peace."

"Our ambition," I added, "is that the Pakistan authorities should themselves recognise our usefulness and cherish us as an asset. If we fail in that, I would rather that we wound up our camp and cleared out. Gandhiji would in that event come and stay in Noakhali alone in terms of his pledge. We function here only to carry out his directions."

"You won't mind my confessing it, for there cannot be full co-operation unless parties know each other's mind fully," the Chief Minister replied. "The policy of the League hitherto was to non-cooperate with Mr. Gandhi. Rightly or wrongly, the League did not appreciate the intention behind his visit to and stay in Noakhali. You may call it a misunderstanding. Even when he went to Bihar some had their doubts, but he has completely won the hearts of all Muslims by what he has done for them in Calcutta. The situation now has changed. Power has descended upon the Muslim League. The League would welcome, in fact it would want, your cooperation. After all, the police by itself cannot do much to maintain the peace. You may, therefore, rest assured that you will have the fullest cooperation of the League in your peace work and I guarantee that the League will give you complete satisfaction. I will not be satisfied till it has obtained a certificate of confidence from you." As for ourselves, he added, he had complete confidence in us. We would never do anything that was not right.

The talk was partly in Hindustani, partly in English. When Charu gave him a letter in Bengali to read in the middle of the conversation, he said: *Ami Bangla parte pari-na kintu bujte pari* (I cannot read Bengali but I can follow it). Charu, thereupon, read out the letter.

While seeing us off, he said to me: "Mahadev Desai had come very close to me. Ever since his death, I have been feeling his loss. He used to be the link between me and Gandhiji. I hope you will fill that gap."

He had all the gentlemanliness of a "thoroughbred". Afterwards, we learnt about his unique integrity from Police Superintendent Abdullah. "I asked for extra powers to deal with corruption," Abdullah told us. "He (Nazimuddin) said I had full power to search even his residence and put him under arrest if I found him guilty of any corrupt practice. Just then the telephone on his table buzzed. It was his wife calling. 'Can't you send for some extra sugar and flour—it is Id festival today?' 'Here is Abdullah sitting before me,' went back the reply. 'I have just been telling him he has full power to search my premises and put me under arrest if he finds me indulging in any irregularity. He will be down upon us if there is the slightest infraction of the rationing rules.' That was the end of the Begum Sahiba's Id request."

At Khwaja Saheb's suggestion we again met the Chief Minister on the following day. His Finance Minister, Hamid-ul-Huq Chowdhury, was also present. The conversation centred largely on the question of security. The Finance Minister described one of the ringleaders, whom we had named, as a "politically disappointed man, who thought that by organising these disturbances, he would regain his lost credit and realise his frustrated ambition." As for the other ringleader, he said, he knew him well as he was his (the Finance Minister's) ex-client. "I know his volatile, impulsive temperament and how during the disturbances he exterminated the entire family (male members) of Ram Ram Patwari because the Patwari had angered him."

Khwaja Nazimuddin was listening to this description by his Finance Minister of the two ringleaders. He exclaimed: "What shall we do with these fellows?" He asked us what had happened to the cases pending against them. We told him of the intimidation that was being resorted to to stifle further inquiry and get the cases withdrawn.

It led him to tell us how there was dissatisfaction among the local Muslims over what was called "oppression" of innocent Muslims by the police—by which he meant popular resentment over some Muslims, who were believed to be innocent, being implicated in riot cases, and how it had cost the Suhrawardy Ministry its popularity. "Luckily I was not in office then. You may, therefore, depend upon me to see that there shall be no repetition of the past happenings. For any Ministry that may be in power will have to resort to severe measures to put down lawlessness and for that it will be detested by the people. This is in the nature of things and it does not pay."

* * *

In November, 1946, Gandhiji, adhering to his plan to go to Noakhali had served the Bihar Muslims from East Bengal. He now served the Hindus of Noakhali by staying to serve the Muslims of Calcutta though the call from Noakhali rang in his ears. From Calcutta he set out for the bleeding Punjab. But he could not get there either. Delhi claimed him. By his stay in Delhi he was able to serve the whole of India and Pakistan.

Never did he show himself to greater advantage than during those fateful days when like a Titan he rushed from one danger spot to another to prop up the crumbling heavens. His daily utterances at his prayer meetings, his simple "yes" and "no", gestures, even silences became commands, watchwords, orders for the day, to bring the frail ship of India's independence safely to port through the storm-tossed waters that lay ahead.

Part Four

THE TITAN AT WORK

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CITY OF THE DEAD

1

ON THE morning of the 9th September, 1947, Gandhiji arrived in Delhi from Calcutta never to leave again. At the railway station, he was met by Sardar Patel, for the first time without his usual smile and apt pungent joke. He missed, too, some other familiar faces at the station. Arrangements for his reception had been kept a secret even from close friends.

Delhi had become the city of the dead. In the car the Sardar gave him the news. Since the 4th September communal riots had broken out in the capital.

Another surprise awaited him. He was not taken to the sweeper's colony where he used to stay. He was motored straight to Birla House instead. The sweeper's colony was occupied by the refugees from the West Punjab. They would have to be displaced if Gandhiji stayed there.

Hardly had his car arrived at Birla House when Pandit Nehru's drove up. As he gave Gandhiji news, his face was pinched and furrowed by care, overstrain and lack of sleep. A twenty-four hour curfew was in force in the city. The military had been called but firing and looting had not stopped altogether. The streets were littered with the dead. Pandit Nehru was indignant. "The wretcheds have created chaos in the whole city. What can we say to Pakistan now?"

Gandhiji: "What is the use of being angry?"

Pandit Nehru: "I am angry with myself. We go about with armed guards under elaborate security measures. It is a disgrace. Ration shops have been looted. Fruit, vegetables and provisions are difficult to obtain. What must be the plight of the ordinary citizen? Dr. Joshi, the famous surgeon who knew no distinction between Hindu and Muslim but served both alike, was fired upon from a Muslim house while he was proceeding to visit a patient and was killed."

A conference with the leaders followed.

On either side of the border in the two Punjabs, life was becoming impossible for the minorities. Anti-social elements were abroad, defying all authority and destroying the very structure of society. The atmosphere in Delhi had grown more and more tense as refugees poured in from the West Punjab. They brought with them gruesome tales—whole villages devastated, women dishonoured, carried away, distributed

as "booty", sometimes openly sold. Often these stories were exaggerated but as often truth was stranger than fiction. Infants in arms and children had been speared to death in cold blood. There were wholesale forcible conversions. Arson and loot were rampant. Attacks were being made on refugee convoys and refugee trains. Three-fourths of what had happened in Delhi was directly the reaction of these accounts.

Both sides were dissatisfied with the conduct of the British officers of the Boundary Force. The officers on their part complained that the communal virus had infiltrated the army and the police. Muslim troops would not fire on their co-religionists nor would the Hindus and Sikhs fire on theirs. On the 29th August, the Joint Defence Council decided to abolish the Punjab Boundary Force as from the midnight of 31st August, as it had been found to be useless for the purpose for which it was created, and responsibility for maintaining peace devolved upon the respective Governments. Mountbatten, his last executive responsibility having lapsed, then left for Simla for a ten day's rest but was called back by a peremptory telephonic message from Delhi. He arrived in the capital on the afternoon of the 5th September. The same day the Government decided to set up an Emergency Committee of the Cabinet, with him as chairman, to deal with the situation.

Under a notification issued by the Government of India, Delhi Province was declared a dangerously disturbed area. Orders were issued to the police and armed forces to shoot to kill when they shot at law breakers. The notification permitted the infliction of death penalty for offences like attempt to murder, kidnapping, abduction, arson, dacoity and looting.

After the fury of the first slaughter had been brought under control in the East Punjab, a most dangerous problem arose in the capital itself, where at one stage every fourth person was a refugee. The administration was faced with a most difficult situation. In the tornado of primitive passions that had broken loose individual wills seemed to count for nothing. Millions had been uprooted and thrown into an atomic turmoil, like forest leaves caught in a tropical hurricane.

The biggest migration of population in recorded history was in progress. Almost ten million people were on the move in both directions across the border in the Punjab. The Government had not anticipated an outbreak of such dimensions. The civil authority in both the Punjabs was paralysed.

A military evacuation organisation had been set up by the Indian Union Government which took over the evacuation of refugees from the civil authorities in the first week of September. All modes of transport were employed for the purpose—trains, motor cars and air planes. Between 27th August and 6th November, it was later computed, 673 trains were run carrying over 2,799,000 refugees inside India and across the border. Over 427,000 non-Muslims and over 217,000

Muslims were moved during the same period by motor transport using 1,200 military and civil vehicles. 27,000 evacuees were brought to India by Government chartered planes in 962 flights between 15th September and 7th December. But these could only make a small bite into the problem. The only effective way of moving such large numbers was by route marches. These marches were in progress in both directions. Other movements were in the offing. To avoid clashes, block timings had been mutually arranged between the authorities on both sides.

Feeding, clothing and housing these millions; the control of epidemics that might break out for lack of proper sanitary arrangements and medical relief and the prevention of inevitable clashes between the incoming refugees—who had arrived with minds almost unhinged by grief and the privations they had suffered—and the minorities still on both sides, the danger of clashes between the incoming and outgoing refugee columns; these and many others were problems of baffling magnitude and complexity. Mountbatten's remark in the Emergency Committee, "If we go down in Delhi we are finished" gave a true measure of the gravity of the crisis with which the Government were faced.

How would Gandhiji react? Would he repeat in Delhi the miracle he had wrought in Calcutta? All eyes were turned on him. But his own were turned inward. At last he spoke to the assembled leaders. Delhi was not Calcutta, he declared. "I find no-one in Delhi who can accompany me and control the Muslims. There is no such person amongst the Sikhs or among the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh either. I do not know what I shall be able to do here. But one thing is clear. *I cannot leave this place until Delhi is peaceful again.*"

Tense faces relaxed as by that laconic statement he placed the Atlantean load upon his shoulders. Hope glimmered where only a short while before gloom had reigned.

He appeared to be buried in deep thought. "God, Thou art my only support; I need none other," he was heard to mutter to himself.

Some local Muslims came to see him at noon. They wept as they narrated to him their tales of woe. He consoled them. They must have faith in God. They must be brave. He was there in Delhi to "do or die".

In a statement to the Press he said :

> "Man proposes, God disposes" has come true often enough in my life, as it probably has in the case of many others. When I left Calcutta on Sunday last, I knew nothing about the sad state of things in Delhi. But since my arrival in the capital city, I have been listening the whole day long to the tale of woe that

is Delhi today. I have seen several Muslim friends who have recited to me their pathetic story. I have heard enough to warn me that I must not leave Delhi for the Punjab until it has once again become its former peaceful self.

I must do my little bit to calm the heated atmosphere. I must apply the old formula, "do or die" to the capital of India. I am glad to be able to say that the residents of Delhi do not want the senseless destruction that is going on. I am prepared to understand the anger of the refugees, whom fate has driven from West Punjab. But anger is short madness. . . . Retaliation is no remedy. It makes the original disease . . . worse. I, therefore, ask all those who are engaged in committing senseless murders, arson and loot, to stay their hands.

At noon news came that refugees were about to attack the Tuberculosis Hospital opposite Kingsway refugee camp, where there was a large number of Muslim patients. Gandhiji asked Sushila to proceed there. He briefed her: "On your way stop at the Secretariat and inform the Sardar and Jawaharlal where I am sending you."

At the Secretariat the Sardar was not to be found in his office but she saw Pandit Nehru. Pandit Nehru asked her to accompany him in his car. At the Town Hall he asked the Deputy Commissioner to rush a guard to the hospital. The Deputy Commissioner said he could do nothing. All the guards were out on duty. Pandit Nehru turned round to the Deputy Commissioner, saying, "All right, then I shall send Sushila to guard them." And with a fatherly pat on the back he pushed her into the car.

On her way, she saw a mosque in flames. She stopped to see if there was anyone inside. "The flames prevented us exploring all the rooms. As I stood there, a shower of bullets came from the building opposite." It was a stronghold of the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh. The bullets were evidently intended to kill the Muslims and any of their sympathisers prowling about the mosque.

On reaching the hospital she found that the patients had been evacuated, with Lady Mountbatten's help, to Juma mosque only a few minutes before. On the road, some refugees were getting away with looted goods in the direction of the Kingsway camp. "What are you doing here?" she shouted at a policeman in uniform who was ambling a few yards behind. "Don't you see it is looted property? Can't you stop them?" Giving a casual, apathetic look, the policeman replied: "Bigger men than I cannot stop this. What can I do?"

Just then another car pulled up from behind. Pandit Nehru having sent Sushila to the hospital had felt worried. After attending to some urgent business he followed her. She recounted the conversation with the policeman. He was very angry and drove towards

the camp. The refugees were returning with their loot. Pandit Nehru jumped out of the car. A crowd gathered around him. He scolded them: "I thought we were helping our suffering brethren. I did not know we were sheltering thieves and dacoits."

The crowd scowled. They also were angry. A fiery young man came forward and said: "You lecture to us. Do you know what we have suffered?" Pandit Nehru could contain himself no longer. He shook the young man by the scruff of his neck. Sushila felt anxious. Supposing the crowd got out of hand? She tried to pull him away. But with his elbow he pushed her back. As he released his hold on the young man, the latter muttered, "Yes, Panditji, go on. What better luck can I expect than to die at your hands?"

Pandit Nehru's wrath melted away. His face was sad; his voice full of emotion. "This is not the time for me to tell you how much I feel for you all," he said, "and how my heart aches at your suffering. But what I say to you is: 'Have these Muslims done you any harm? If not, then you must not injure them. We must be just. If justice requires it and it is necessary, we can go to war with Pakistan and you can enlist. But this kind of thing is degrading and cowardly.' "

The crowd cheered wildly: "Jawaharlal Nehru Zindabad."

When Sushila narrated the incident to the Sardar, he was upset. "Is this the way an administrator should act? His safety is my charge. He should not go on exposing himself—taking unnecessary risks like this."

2

From the next day—10th September—Gandhiji set out to make a tour of the riot-affected parts of the city and the various Muslim and Hindu refugee camps, beginning with Arab-ki Sarai, near Humayun's tomb, where Muslim Meos from Alwar and Bharatpur States were awaiting their removal to Pakistan. They said that none of them wanted to leave India. Gandhiji promised to see what could be done for them.

From Arab-ki Sarai he went to the Jamia Millia Islamia—the Muslim National University—at Okhla (see Vol. I, page 184). A number of Muslim men and women from the surrounding villages had taken shelter there. For two days they had lived in hourly danger of death. They looked pale and tired. But there was courage and faith in the words of Dr. Zakir Husain, the Vice-Chancellor of the Jamia. A few days before, while returning from the Punjab, he had been surrounded by a hostile crowd at Jullunder railway station and was saved only by the providential arrival of a Sikh captain and another Hindu friend who recognised him and protected him at considerable

risk to themselves. He gave to Gandhiji an account of what he had seen and himself experienced as he came through the Punjab. He was sad but not bitter. He said the Government were doing everything possible to guard the Muslims and to ensure their safety. Gandhiji's arrival had further galvanised the administration.

Gandhiji felt sick at heart. If even a person like Dr. Zakir Husain was not safe what was life worth in India? One of the Muslim refugee women held in her arms a two month old baby that had lost both its parents during the disturbances. It brought tears to the eyes of many. "Die with God's name on your lips if necessary but do not lose heart," said Gandhiji to the refugees. Turning to the women members of the families of the Jamia staff, he said to them: "If all of you were to die bravely on the premises of this beautiful institution, which Hindus and Muslims have jointly laboured to create, I should not grieve."

Angry faces surrounded him at Dewan Hall Hindu refugee camp which he visited on his way back. It was crowded with Hindu and Sikh refugees. Some accused him of hardheartedness—of having more sympathy for the Muslims than for them. There was a strange, sad look on Gandhiji's face. They had a right to be angry, he said. They were the real sufferers.

There were thousands upon thousands of them in various camps, herded together like cattle, lacking even elementary decencies of life not to speak of food, clothing or shelter. Misery was writ large on their faces. Gandhiji suffered with them. But they could not see it. Their wounds were fresh and bleeding; revenge seemed sweet to many. One of them was heard to say that they had yet avenged only half an anna in the rupee, but, now that "the old man" (Gandhiji) had come, they would not be able to square up their account. Yet they clung to him. There was something in him which drew them to him in spite of themselves. They might be angry with him, even quarrel with him but in their heart of hearts they knew that he was the friend of all and enemy of none; he loved them and theirs with a love greater than they themselves were, perhaps, capable of. They wanted him to guide them even when they were not prepared to follow his advice.

The Wavell Canteen transit camp near the railway station was filled with Muslim refugees waiting to be evacuated to Pakistan. A wounded Pathan was brought into the camp while Gandhiji was there. It was a pathetic sight. "India has to expiate for the massacre of the innocents," Gandhiji remarked while arrangements were being made for the removal of the Pathan to the hospital.

The day's itinerary, covering forty-one miles, ended with a visit to the Kingsway refugee camp.

In the course of his post-prayer address at evening Gandhiji remarked that he was anxious to go to Pakistan and test for himself the

reality of Jinnah's professions. The Hindus of Pakistan were their brothers, he had declared. They would look after them as such and feed them before feeding even themselves. Were these brave words meant only to tickle the ears of the world? But he could not go there owing to the disturbances in Delhi. It would not do for either Dominion to plead helplessness and say that it was all the work of the ruffians. Each Dominion must bear full responsibility for the acts of those who lived in it.

The same held equally good in respect of the Indian Union, he went on to say. Were the Union Ministers to declare their bankruptcy and shamelessly own to the world that the people of Delhi or the refugees would not voluntarily obey the rule of the land? He, for one, would like, he said, their Ministers to break in the attempt to wean the people from their madness rather than bend. It was in the hands of the people to send him to the Punjab by restoring normal conditions in Delhi. Why should there be curfew in Delhi? Why should Delhi be the city of the dead?

On the 11th September Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, accompanied by Sushila, took Gandhiji to the Irwin Hospital to see the wounded. The casualty department and the operation theatre were being kept busy round the clock. The staff were dead tired. Among the wounded was a four year child with a bullet wound. Gandhiji stood by each bed and administered comfort to the patient and solace to his or her relatives. He then returned to Birla House. Asked by some of her old medico friends in the hospital to assist them in their heavy work, Sushila stayed behind.

Soon after there was a shower of bullets on the hospital from a building across the maidan where the office of the *Dawn*, the Muslim League organ, used to be and from a mosque close to it as also from another building which was said to be a stronghold of the Muslim Leaguers. At three in the afternoon, the police occupied the hospital tower to return the fire.

When Pandit Nehru came to Birla House at about 9 p.m. to see Gandhiji, Sushila had not yet returned. Gandhiji was feeling worried. Pandit Nehru had a military jeep sent to fetch her. But it was only late at night, when the firing had died down somewhat, that anyone could with safety enter or leave the hospital.

The bulk of the police force of Delhi was Muslim. A number of them, with their uniforms and arms, had deserted. The loyalty of the rest was doubtful. Sardar Patel had to wire for reliable Gurkha police from West Bengal. A contingent of 250 constables with some sub-inspectors of police was sent by the Chief Minister of the Central Provinces in response to an urgent message from him. There were rumours of a *coup d'etat* on the part of the Muslims to seize the administration. Searches of Muslim houses by the police had revealed

dumps of bombs, arms and ammunition. Sten guns, Bren guns, mortars, and wireless transmitter sets were seized and secret miniature factories for the manufacture of the same, were uncovered. In explanation the Muslims alleged that arms were planted by their enemies in deserted Muslim houses. That was not unlikely in some cases. But in a number of places rifles, Sten guns and mortars were actually used by the Muslims in pitched fights.

The Sardar was at the end of his nerves. During one of his visits to the city one day he found that firing had been going on incessantly from a building occupied by the Muslims for the last twenty-four hours. "Why has this pocket not been cleared?" he asked a high military officer accompanying him. The latter replied that this was not possible with the force at their disposal unless they blew up the building. "Then why did not you do it?" the Sardar snapped.

The bugbear of unlicensed hidden arms continued to haunt the public mind as well as the administration. From the very beginning, Gandhiji tried to impress upon the local Muslims that the possession of unlicensed arms was bound to do them and the possessors more harm than good. Their salvation lay in surrendering them. If his advice had been implicitly followed, it would have taken the trump card out of the Hindu communalists' hands and put upon the administration the whole burden of protecting Muslim life and property. This, however, was not done with the result that the communalists exploited it to inflame passions against the Muslims and to thwart the intentions of the administration. Many innocent Muslims had thus to pay for the misdeeds of the few.

Surrender of arms to Gandhiji continued but only in driblets. Some were seized by the police. The haul at no stage was up to much for Delhi. But, argued Gandhiji, hidden arms used to be possessed even during the British regime. No-one worried then. "Let them be unearthed by all means. By all means explode all hidden ammunition dumps. But let us not give a dog a bad name to hang him. . . . To be worthy of the liberty we have won after . . . years of toil, let us bravely face all the difficulties that confront us, however hard they may be. Facing them squarely will make us fitter and nobler."[1]

The Sikhs were sore over the Government's decision to prohibit, on security grounds, the carrying of *kirpans* more than nine inches long. Their representatives met Gandhiji in a deputation and complained that any such restriction was an interference with their religion. "But I do not see religion anywhere in evidence today," replied Gandhiji. "And if it is a religious *symbol*, the restriction as regards its size should not matter."

The Sikhs were not satisfied. They cited in support of their contention an old judgment of the Privy Council which interpreted *kirpan* as a sword of any size. Gandhiji told them that it was wholly

irrelevant and even improper to cite legal precedents to break up healthy restraints under which alone society could grow in a state of liberty. *Kirpan* which the Sikh religion enjoined upon its votaries to carry was a symbol of purity and self-restraint. It was a weapon for the defence of innocent women and children and old or disabled persons against tyranny in the face of overwhelming odds; never a weapon of offence or to be used in retaliation against defenceless women and children. Even during the war against the Muslims, the code was to tend the wounded on both sides. The *kirpan* had of late been used for totally indefensible purposes and he who used it wrongly forfeited the right to carry it.

On the 12th September Gandhiji visited the Juma mosque. The mosque and its environs were filthy. The hot sun beat fiercely down on the pavement. But unmindful of the filth and the heat, Gandhiji reverentially took off his sandals and walked barefoot up the steps. There were about 5,000 Muslim refugees in the mosque in addition to the large number who had assembled for the Friday prayer. Some of the worst ruffians in the city were said to be among them. All the three women members of the party were with him. Gandhiji felt apprehensive. Normally he rested his arms on the shoulders of the girl on either side. On that occasion he extended his arms so as to cover all the three and so long as they were in the mosque would not let anyone of them lag behind.

The filth at Hyderabad House—the Nizam's Palace—where the upper class Muslim refugees had taken shelter was even worse.

In the afternoon a prominent Muslim League leader with a Muslim friend of his came to see Gandhiji. "This is not the kind of Pakistan that we had envisaged," they said to him. "You alone can save the city." They offered him their services in his peace mission.

In the prayer meeting that evening Gandhiji appealed to the people to forget the past and not to brood over their sufferings but extend the right hand of fellowship to one another, determine to live in peace. The Muslims should be proud to belong to the Indian Union and show due respect to the tricolour. Such of them as had unlicensed arms should surrender them at once. When the handing over was voluntary the Government should take no action.

The head of the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh also called upon Gandhiji. It was common knowledge that the R.S.S., as it was called for short, had been behind the bulk of the killings in the city as also in various other parts of India. This these friends denied. Their organisation was for protecting Hinduism—not for killing Muslims. It was not hostile to anyone. It stood for peace.

This was laying on a bit thick. But Gandhiji, with his boundless faith in human nature and in the redemptive power of truth, felt he must give everybody a chance to make good his *bona fides*. It was something

that they did not glory in wrong doing. They should issue a public statement, he told them, repudiating the allegations against them and openly condemn the killing and harassment of the Muslims that had taken place and that still was going on in the city. They said Gandhiji could do that himself on their behalf on the strength of what they had told him. Gandhiji answered that he would certainly do that but if what they were saying was sincerely meant, it was better that the public should have it from their own lips.

A member of Gandhiji's party interjected that the R.S.S. people had done a fine job of work at Wah refugee camp. They had shown discipline, courage and capacity for hard work. "But don't forget," answered Gandhiji, "even so had Hitler's Nazis and the Fascists under Mussolini." He characterised the R.S.S. as a "communal body with a totalitarian outlook."

A few days later, the R.S.S. leaders took Gandhiji to attend one of the rallies they were holding at the sweepers' colony. He had seen some of their literature. The theory propounded therein was that the Hindus were the original inhabitants of India. The late Lokamanya Tilak was wrong in his thesis that the Arctic circle was the original home of the Vedas and the Aryans had migrated from there into India through the north-west. It was not the Aryans, they asserted, who had come in from outside. It was the Arctic that had shifted from India where it was originally situated when the Vedas were composed! "Quite long ago it (North Pole) was in the part of the world . . . called Bihar and Orissa at present."[2] India, therefore, belonged to the Hindus and all those who had not assimilated or been assimilated by Hindu religion and culture were aliens and could only claim the rights of minorities. Under the pernicious influence of the Congress "the idea was spread . . . for the first time . . . (that) the Nation . . . was composed of all those who happened to reside therein. . . . We began to class ourselves with our old invaders and foes under the outlandish name—India—and tried to win them over to join hands with us in our struggle . . . (and) completely lost sight of our true Hindu Nationhood in our wild goose chase after the phantom of founding a 'really' democratic 'State'."[3]

In welcoming Gandhiji to their rally, the R. S. S. leader described him as "a great man that Hinduism has produced". Gandhiji replying observed that while he was certainly proud of being a Hindu, his Hinduism was neither intolerant nor exclusive. The beauty of Hinduism as he understood it was that it absorbed the best that was in all faiths. If Hindus believed that in India there was no place for non-Hindus on equal and honourable terms and Muslims, if they wanted to live in India, must be content with an inferior status, or if the Muslims thought that in Pakistan Hindus could live only as a subject race on the sufferance of the Muslims, it would mean an eclipse of Hinduism

and an eclipse of Islam. He was glad, therefore, he said, to have their assurance that their policy was not of antagonism towards Islam. He warned them that if the charge against them that their organisation was behind the killing of the Muslims was correct, it would come to a bad end.

In the course of questions and answers that followed Gandhiji was asked whether Hinduism did not permit the killing of evil-doers. If not, how did he explain the exhortation by Lord Krishna in the second chapter of the Gita to destroy the Kauravas?

The reply to the first question, said Gandhiji, was both 'yes' and 'no'. One had to be an infallible judge as to who was the evil-doer before the question of killing could arise. In other words one had to be completely faultless before such a right could accrue to one. How could a sinner claim the right to judge or execute another sinner? As for the second question, granting that the right to punish the evil-doer was recognised by the Gita, it could be exercised properly by the constituted Government only. "Both the Sardar and Pandit Nehru will be rendered powerless if you become judge and executioner in one. They are tried servants of the nation. Give them a chance to serve you. Do not sabotage their efforts by taking the law into your own hands."

There was a big crowd at the prayer meeting in the evening at Kingsway camp. As soon as the recitation from the Koran commenced, someone in the gathering shouted: "To the recitation of these verses our mothers and sisters were dishonoured, our dear ones killed. We will not let you recite these verses here."

Some shouted *Gandhi Murdabad* (death to Gandhi). All efforts to restore order failed. The prayer had consequently to be abandoned. As he withdrew, stones were thrown at his car. It was later learnt that some refugees had collected empty soda water bottles for committing more serious mischief.

Did he still want to go on with his public prayer meetings? Did he expect people who were demented by grief to forgive and forget and show appreciation of the beauty of verses charged with such terrible memories for them? Any other person might have wavered in the face of such a challenge. But not Gandhiji. To temporise would have been to deny his faith. A scripture did not become bad because its votaries went astray, he argued. The daily prayer, therefore, could not be given up. But from the next day the portion objected to would come in the beginning instead of in the middle so that the objectors could register their opposition at the very outset. He would not proceed with the prayer without the whole-hearted consent of the gathering. A thing like public prayer could not be imposed upon them against their will. But he would suffer no interruption after the prayer had begun. If the gathering gave a guarantee that they would not try to put down the objectors by the use of force

or show of force, or harbour malice or resentment against them, even if they indulged in hooliganism, the prayer would be continued despite the interruption.

Like a clever pointsman, he thus switched their burning resentment to a grim determination not to be provoked by any provocation however great. His prayer meetings became a barometer of the discipline of non-violence that the people had attained and a means for devising and testing new techniques for further cultivating it. If the whole audience was non-violent in intent and action, he averred, the objector would perforce restrain himself:

> Such I hold to be working of non-violence. . . . All universal rules of conduct known as God's commandments are simple and easy to understand and to carry out, if the will is there. They only appear to be difficult because of the inertia which governs mankind. There is nothing at a standstill in nature. Only God is motionless for He was, is and will be the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, and yet is ever moving. . . . Hence I hold that if mankind is to live, it has to come increasingly under the sway of truth and non-violence.[4]

3

The Communists had in the past denounced Gandhiji's leadership. Their charge against him was that having started the revolution, owing to his essentially "bourgeois" outlook, he, by his insistence on non-violence, had prevented it from running to its "logical" end. Their leader, P. C. Joshi, one day came to Gandhiji and said: "The democratic forces are ready to fight communalism. They are only waiting to be mobilised. Give us marching orders and we will carry out your commands."

Gandhiji: "I feel like a general without an army. To whom am I to give the marching orders?"

Joshi: "The general has no confidence in himself. He is not calling the army. Calcutta was a hundred times worse. In Calcutta you had *shanti sena* (peace brigades); here we shall provide Home Guards."

Gandhiji patiently explained to him the difference between Calcutta and Delhi and what had made the "Calcutta miracle" possible, but in vain. Comrade Joshi persisted: "You have made the nation, you must take it on. Give us the call."

"I made it and (according to the Communists) I unmade it," replied Gandhiji in his quiet manner. "You are all young men. I have not your self-assurance — and I am not sorry for that. I shall try to profit by your advice."

Joshi (missing the delicate irony): "Please do not say that."

Gandhiji (suddenly warming up): "I mean what I say. I am biding my time. I have patience but I am free to confess that my patience is fast coming to an end."

One of Gandhiji's companions asked the Communist friend as he left Gandhiji's room why the Communists were so particular about Gandhiji's lead. They had ranged themselves against him in the past and they in most things were as poles asunder from him. Those who had the courage of their convictions should carry on all by themselves.

But the Communist leader was not interested in all that. The Communist opposition to communalism was genuine. But their organisation had proved itself to be thoroughly unreliable and their philosophy of opportunism did not inspire confidence in their *bona fides*. They appeared to be anxious only to use Gandhiji's name to regain the popularity which they had lost by aligning themselves with the British during the "Quit India" struggle. This, in itself, would not have put off Gandhiji. He had the supreme knack of separating the grain from the chaff. He did not mind honest ideological differences. But he expected and exacted from those who elected to follow him —discipline, honesty, truthfulness, openness, readiness to produce one's cards for examination over and over again, submission to probes however deep. Opportunists did not find it convenient to travel for long in his company. They soon dropped out. This happened in the case of the Indian Communists.

* * *

On the 13th September, Gandhiji visited the Muslim refugee camp at Purana Quila, where only six months ago the Asian Conference, boycotted by the Muslim League in pursuit of its communalist aims, had been held. Now there were about 75,000 Muslim refugees awaiting there to be evacuated to Pakistan. Some Muslim Leaguers, after making as much mischief as they could, had established themselves there as "leaders" and were engaging among other things in defrauding their brother refugees by carrying on a surreptitious traffic in the rations that were being sent to feed them. The result was that every day nearly ten thousand refugees were going short of rations. Some of the policemen, who had deserted with their arms, were said to have taken shelter in the camp. It nearly resulted in Sardar Patel sending out a battalion to round up the unlicensed arms in the camp.

The refugees were in a very ugly mood. As soon as Gandhiji's car entered the gate, crowds of them rushed out of their tents and surrounded it. Anti-Gandhi slogans were shouted. Someone from among the crowd violently opened the door of Gandhiji's car. One of the friends who had taken Gandhiji to the camp asked the driver to take the car out of the camp by the nearest gate. The driver pressed

the pedal and the car shot forward. But Gandhiji ordered him to stop. He wanted to face the angry crowd, he said. Immediately the refugees came running up and again surrounded the car. While his companion helplessly looked on, he stepped out. The crowd closed in upon him. He asked them to assemble on the lawn. Some sat down. Those on the fringes kept standing and, full of anger, gesticulated menacingly. Some Muslim volunteers tried to pacify them.

Anxious moments followed. There was no loudspeaker arrangement and Gandhiji's feeble voice could not carry far. Leaning upon the shoulders of one of his companions, he asked him to repeat his words on the top of his voice. At first the refugees were inclined to be rude. When he said that there was one God for all — "to me there are no distinctions of Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Sikh, they are all one to me" — there were shouts of angry protest. He entreated them to be calm and shed anger and fear. God was the ultimate refuge, not man howsoever powerful he might be. God would set right what man had spoilt. For his part he had come here to "do or die", he concluded.

There was nothing new in the words but they heard the passion in his voice and saw in the agonised resigned look on that worn out face how deeply he felt for and suffered with them and all those who suffered. Scowling ceased. Soon tears were trickling down the cheeks of some. They narrated to him the tale of their hardships and sufferings. He listened to them with deep sympathy and promised to do all he could for them. Those who were thirsting for his blood a few moments before were now his friends. They respectfully escorted him to his car and stood there in silence as it passed out of the camp with him seated in the back seat, his hands folded to bid them good-bye and furrows of deep pain on his face.

When the Sardar learnt of the incident he fumed. As Home Minister, it was his duty to ensure Gandhiji's safety. Why was he not informed in time to take security measures? He gave strict instructions to Gandhiji's staff that in future he was not to be taken out anywhere without prior notice to him.

To his great sorrow and humiliation Gandhiji had learnt that Dr. Ansari's daughter and her husband had been forced to leave their own house in Daryaganj, where he used to stay as the good doctor's guest (see Vol. I, page 184). They were now living in a hotel for fear of the Hindu and Sikh refugees.

Was it not a shame, he remarked to the gathering at his prayer meeting in the evening, that the daughter of a pillar of the Congress and doyen of Hindu-Muslim unity should have to leave her home like that? "It grieves and hurts me that this historic city, where Indraprastha once stood, which has witnessed the rise and fall of so many dynasties and civilisations, where ruled the Kauravas and the Pandavas and the Moghuls, where the Muslims honoured Swami Shraddhanand

by asking him to address them from the Juma mosque and which the Swamiji sanctified by his martyrdom, should have disgraced itself as it has today."

Referring to his experience at Purana Quila and other refugee camps, Gandhiji said that he had met there angry faces and he had seen the same beam with love. It would be madness to make the present estrangement into a permanent enmity. Transfer of population was a fatal snare. It would only mean greater misery. The solution lay in both the communities living in their original homes in peace and friendship. "I plead for a frank and bold acknowledgment by the respective Governments of the misdeeds of their majority communities. It is the bounden duty of each Dominion to guarantee full protection to its minorities."

Gandhiji visited two more Muslim refugee camps — one at Idgah, the other at Motia Khan — in the course of the day. What he saw there made him hang down his head in shame. Why were so many Hindus and Sikhs coming away from the West Pakistan Provinces? — he asked at the prayer meeting in the evening. Why were the Muslims of Delhi frightened into leaving their homes? Had both the Governments broken down? The fratricide which was going on was national suicide. It was a betrayal by the individuals of their own Government.

A group of Congress workers came to Gandhiji a few days later and said, "Give us orders." He had orders for them. Delhi's sanitary arrangements were nearing a collapse, decomposing corpses still filled its streets and bye-lanes with stink. Some sweepers had been brought from Meerut to work in Purana Quila. But they were so frightened by the conditions there that they begged to be sent back to their homes. Gandhiji asked the Congress workers who had come to him to organise themselves into scavenging squads. "If you offer to go and work there," he told them, "your services will be greatly appreciated by the camp authorities. If in the course of your work, some of you should get killed, it will be your crowning glory and I shall congratulate you and the Congress organisation on it."

* * *

On the night of the 14th September, Delhi experienced one of its worst thunderstorms. The rain fell in bucketfuls and the sky was rent by incessant sheet-lightning. As Gandhiji lay awake in bed listening to what should have been the soothing sound of life-givingrain, his thoughts went out to those thousands of refugees — men, women and children — who, foodless and shelterless, must at places be in knee-deep water in the various refugee camps and to others outside on their long, weary treks. Was all this inevitable? In a written message to his evening prayer gathering the next day he said:

> These thoughts have haunted me throughout these last twenty hours. My silence has been a blessing. It has made me inquire within. Have the citizens of Delhi gone mad? Have they no humanity left in them? Have love of the country and its freedom no appeal for them? I must be pardoned for putting the first blame on the Hindus and Sikhs. Could they not be men enough to stem the tide of hatred? I would urge the Muslims of Delhi to shed all fear, trust God and discover all the arms in their possession which the Hindus and Sikhs fear they have. Either the minority rely upon God and His creature man to do the right thing or rely upon their firearms to defend themselves against those whom, they feel, they must not trust.

Addressing the Hindus and Sikhs, he proceeded: "My advice is precise and firm. Its soundness is manifest. Trust your Government to defend every citizen against wrong-doers. . . . Further, trust it to demand and get damages for every member of the minority wrongfully dispossessed. All that neither Government can do is to resurrect the dead. The people of Delhi will make it difficult to demand justice from the Pakistan Government if they take the law into their own hands. Those who seek justice must do justice, must have clean hands."

He suggested that the Hindus and Sikhs should invite the Muslims, who had been driven out of their homes, to return. If they could take that courageous step, it would immediately reduce the refugee problem to its simplest terms and command recognition from Pakistan, nay from the whole world. "The wrong of Pakistan will be undone by the right of a resolute non-transfer of population. I hope I shall have the courage to stand by it even though mine may be a solitary voice."

He returned to the theme three days later. He was presenting to them not his own way of non-violence, he said, much as he would have liked to, but only asking them to adopt the path that all democratic nations followed. In a democracy the individual will was governed and limited by the social will, which was the State and which was governed by and for democracy. If every individual took the law into his own hands, it became anarchy. They should, therefore, subdue their anger and let the State secure justice. If instead of allowing their anger to get the better of their reason they permitted the State to do its duty, every Hindu and every Sikh refugee would be able with honour and dignity to return to his home, the girls that had been abducted would be returned, forcible conversions would be made null and void and their properties would be returned to them. But they would ruin their own case if they interfered with the even course of justice, or if they insisted upon their Muslim brothers and sisters being driven out of India.

It was true, the Hindus and Sikhs were badly treated in Pakistan,

he continued. But it was no less true that in the East Punjab also the minority, i.e. Muslims, had been treated likewise. All were alike guilty. Guilt could not be measured in golden scales. He hoped that wise counsels would prevail. The Muslims, who had not of their own free will chosen to migrate to Pakistan should be asked by their neighbours to return to their homes with a feeling that they would be perfectly safe. This could not be effected by the help of the military. It could be done only if the people returned to sanity.

A friend pointed out to Gandhiji the incongruity of the Government spending crores of rupees for the rehabilitation of the refugees while he was telling them day in and day out that the refugees had to return to their original homes in Pakistan. Were the poor refugees to spend all their time in coming and going to and fro between India and Pakistan? Their loyalty was with the Indian Union. How could Pakistan be expected to welcome them as loyal Pakistan citizens?

Gandhiji answered that he knew the refugee mind better. In their heart of hearts there was a deep yearning to return to their native land but the continuing conflagration had clouded everybody's judgment. But for this they would have stayed there and pledged their loyalty to Pakistan. As soon as the conditions settled down, they would all want to return. "It is this consummation that I have in view. If I live long enough, you will see it happen. Then you will understand what I am doing and telling you today."

Some Muslims invited Gandhiji to shift to a Muslim quarter in Delhi as he had done in Calcutta. "If you stay in our midst," they prayed, "we shall feel safe."

Gandhiji agreed to their proposal. They suggested Asaf Ali's house. Some of Gandhiji's party accordingly went there to get the house ready for Gandhiji. But Asaf Ali's residence was situated in a very disturbed locality. Only that very morning Sardar Patel had told Gandhiji how firing had been going on all through the night from a building not far from there. An armed police party had tried four times to enter the building but without success. When at last they succeeded in effecting an entry, the snipers escaped by jumping over the roofs of the neighbouring houses and left behind a large dump of arms and ammunition. If a stray, unintended Muslim bullet got Gandhiji, it might provoke an outbreak of reprisals which would imperil the safety of every Muslim in India. Was it worthwhile taking that risk?

The issue being put to the Muslims, they also felt that the risk was too great. They were told that the military would be posted in that area instead to give them protection. They liked the idea. The whole episode being related to Gandhiji, he dropped the idea of going to stay in a Muslim locality, though he was by no means enamoured of the proposed alternative. He never wearied of telling everybody during those hectic days that if he had his way, he would withdraw

the entire police and the military from the city and let the Hindus and Muslims, if they liked, fight it out among themselves. The odds were that sensible elements among them would come together and make common cause against the hooligans.

4

During the two weeks that Gandhiji had been in the capital the initial fury of the outbreak had been brought under control, but other stupendous problems now began to loom on the horizon and threatened to prove equally catastrophic in their consequences.

When towards the end of August and the beginning of September, fleeing refugees from the towns and villages over the border on both sides began to pour into the respective Dominions, both the Governments felt that the trouble would before long be brought under control. But it was soon realised that it was vain to expect this, while ignited material in the form of large masses of refugees reduced to stark destitution and despair continued to pour in from across the border. These poor wrecks of human beings—dehumanised by their suffering and burning only for revenge—set up a counter-current of refugee migration at the other end when they reached there, and so the vicious circle of revenge and retaliation, reprisals and counter-reprisals went on widening.

In the second half of September, huge foot convoys of non-Muslims, each 30,000 to 40,000 strong, started from the fertile canal colonies of West Punjab upon a 150 miles trek. From 18th September to 20th October, twenty-four of these, altogether 849,000 strong, flanked by their cattle and bullock-carts crossed over to India. An astonishing phenomenon was the movement of some 200,000 refugees, mostly Sikhs, from Lyallpur in a column 57 miles long. On the way, fleeing refugees, whether they travelled by road or by rail or on foot, were attacked by the people from the surrounding villages. Outbreak of cholera and other epidemics and later floods added to their misery. Many thousands thus perished on the way.

Strangely enough, it was noticed that when columns respectively of Muslim and non-Muslim refugees moving in opposite directions marched past each other, they seldom paid attention to each other. Each was intent upon getting safely across the border as quickly as possible to the exclusion of any other thought. Sometimes when they were near enough, Sikh and Muslim refugees were even heard commiserating each other's misfortunes and blaming their respective Governments for agreeing to the partition.

To settle the incoming refugees in the deserted Muslim houses or other Muslim buildings suggested itself as an easy and ready-made

solution. The communalist section openly advocated this course and incited the non-Muslim refugees to occupy the Muslim vacant houses and terrorise and turn out the rest from their homes. There was a great temptation in the circumstances to ask for a planned transfer of population on a reciprocal basis. But once the principle was accepted, Gandhiji warned, it was clear to him as daylight that its application could not be confined to the two Punjabs. And if no Muslim could live in India and no non-Muslim in Pakistan, the estrangement between the two Dominions would become permanent with a mutually destructive war as the inevitable result. He, therefore, insisted that the vicious circle must be broken somewhere, the squeezing of the Muslims by the non-Muslim refugees should stop and the property and houses of such Muslims as had either been killed or temporarily forced to flee should be protected. The Government should act as trustee on behalf of the rightful owners in respect of those houses and other property, till such time as the owners might return or could be brought back.

But how was this to be brought home to the Hindu and Sikh refugees in the existing poisoned state of the atmosphere? They argued that since they had been driven out from Pakistan, why should the Muslims have a place in the Indian Union or Delhi at least? Gandhiji reasoned with them. He had never contemplated that the Indian Government should ignore the ill-treatment of Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan; he knew the Union Government could not bear the double burden; to insure the safety of the Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan was the duty of the Indian Government. But for that very reason, it was necessary that the Government should be given a free hand and should receive the full and sincere cooperation of everyone in India. The question of degree, or who started it, should not be allowed to influence their behaviour.

Gandhiji's meetings with the refugees were often stormy. A crowd of several hundred of them from West Punjab one day came to see him at Birla House. Fifty of their representatives were taken to meet him. One of them was an advocate from Montgomery. He described how a Muslim mob came and surrounded about 200 women and children. One of them killed an old man and then sat on his chest. "I have been a votary of non-violence all my life. But can Hindus and Muslims live together after all this? Can we trust the Muslims to remain loyal to the Indian Union?"

Gandhiji: "If Congressmen, in the hour of their test, resile from their nationalist creed, they will sign the death warrant of the Congress. The worst that can befall us is death. But death by itself should not matter since everybody must sooner or later die. The question is: Which is better—to die for the sake of one's faith with the name of God on one's lips, or to die a lingering death of sickness, paralysis or old age? I for one would infinitely prefer the former. It is

unbecoming of thirty-four crores of Hindus to live in fear of four crores of Muslims. If there are any traitors, let them by all means be shot by the Government after proper trial—though that is not my way. But no Government can base its policies on mere suspicion or panic."

A Sikh refugee: "I have my business in Pakistan. If even five per cent. of the Hindus can return to and stay in Pakistan, we shall somehow accommodate the Muslims in the Indian Union."

Gandhiji: "Five per cent. may satisfy you. It won't satisfy me. You invite all Muslims who have left out of fear, bring them back and enable them to occupy their homes. Then come to me and I shall take you back to Pakistan with me to face the worst there. Pakistan will then have either to become *pak* (pure) or it will sink under the weight of its own iniquity."

They put before him the problem of housing the refugees. Gandhiji told them that there was the earth below and God's canopy of the sky over their heads. They should be content with such "accommodation" rather than wish to live in houses forcibly seized from the Muslims. If those who wanted him to go to West Punjab put their shoulder to the wheel, they could within a day put up the necessary shelters. That would assuage the anger of the refugees and create the proper atmosphere which would enable him to go to the Punjab at once.

On the evening of 18th September, Gandhiji paid a visit to Daryaganj—another predominantly Muslim quarter. The Muslims of the locality wept as they complained to him of the partisan behaviour of the military and the police which might after all compel them to leave their homes and go out of Delhi. Gandhiji said to them that they must in no circumstance leave their homes. "Even if the police and the military should open fire upon you, you should face the bullets and bravely die but not flee from your homes." If they lived as law-abiding, honest and loyal citizens, no-one could force them out. He knew there were people, he said, who believed that Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister, was bent upon driving the Muslims out of India. He had long talks with the Sardar and he was there to tell them that this was not so. The Sardar had indignantly repudiated the imputation. But at the same time the Sardar had told him, continued Gandhiji, that he had reason to suspect that the vast majority of the Muslims in India were not loyal. For such people it was better to go to Pakistan. Whilst therefore he had thought it necessary to let them know the Sardar's fear, they could rest assured that the Sardar was not letting his suspicion colour his actions.

The Muslims gave Gandhiji a written declaration that they would be loyal to the Indian Union. If necessary they would even fight under the banner of the Union. "How can I discount your profession of

loyalty made to me on solemn oath?" Gandhiji said to them. "I must trust you. On your part you should trust the Union Government."

Concluding he further advised them that, as a token of their loyalty to the Indian Union, they should issue a public statement that all Hindu women abducted by the Muslims in Pakistan should be restored to their families. They should unequivocally condemn the Pakistan Government where it had departed from the civilised conduct and demand that all those Hindus and Sikhs who had to leave their homes in Pakistan should be invited to return with full guarantee of their safety and self-respect.

In the course of his remarks that evening after the prayer, Gandhiji remarked that it had grieved him to hear that from being the guardians of law and order the police had become the destroyers of law and order. They would be guilty of a gross breach of their oath of loyalty to the Indian Union if they indulged in a partisan behaviour *vis-a-vis* the various communities or failed to protect the life, property, religion or the honour of the womenfolk of all alike under their charge. What was to become of the Juma mosque, he asked, the biggest mosque in India, or of Nankana Saheb and Panja Saheb—the Sikh shrines—in the West Punjab if no Muslim could live in India and no Sikh in Pakistan? Were these sacred places to be turned to other purposes? Never.

But the Hindu and Sikh refugees had lost all hope of Pakistan doing the right thing by the minorities. They pointed out that the utterances and actions of the Pakistan authorities gave little indication of any change of heart or prospect of a turn for the better in the near future. Gandhiji pointed out to them that it was a growing vicious circle. That was why he was striving every nerve to break it in Delhi.

A number of Sikh refugees from the West Punjab came and saw Gandhiji on the 19th September. Some of them wept as they narrated to him how their womenfolk had been dishonoured.

Gandhiji: "You saw it happen with your own eyes?"

The refugee: "Yes, with our own eyes."

Gandhiji: "And you have lived to report this? I feel now more strongly than ever that the only guarantee of protection of a woman's honour is for her to learn to prefer death to dishonour."

In the evening he visited Kucha Tarachand, a Hindu pocket surrounded on all sides by Muslims. The Hindus gave a highly exaggerated recital of their suffering and ended by saying that the whole of the locality should be cleared of Muslims as West Pakistan had been of the Hindus.

Gandhiji replied that he could never associate himself with such a demand. Two wrongs could not make one right. His advice to them was that they should take courage in both hands and be proud bravely

and fearlessly to live in the midst of a large Muslim population, just as he had been asking the Muslims to live in the midst of the Hindu majority.

Some Delhi Maulanas came to Gandhiji on the following day. They brought with them a few rusty arms, which, they said, the Muslims had surrendered in response to his appeal. Gandhiji told them that it was mere eye-wash. It betokened no change of heart on their part. The Maulanas protested that Gandhiji's arrival had effected a "great change" in the outlook of the local Muslims. They were sanguine that before long "complete peace would reign in the city".

Their hyperbolical and evasive replies hurt Gandhiji. "Do not deceive yourselves," he sternly warned them. "My stay here will avail the Muslims nothing if they do not thoroughly cleanse their hearts."

A few days later some other local Muslims came and described to Gandhiji the unsatisfactory conditions in and roundabout the city. "Are you dissatisfied with what I am doing?" Gandhiji asked them. "Or would you like me to take some step which would cut this Gordian knot at a stroke?"

He was hinting at the possibility of a fast on his part. The Muslim friends could not grasp this. But the hard ring of grim determination in his voice took them aback. They replied: "No. No-one else could have done more for us than you have done. When we feel dissatisfied, we shall let you know."

On the 21st September, Gandhiji visited the Muslim locality of Pul Bangash and on his return journey passed through Barā Hindu Rao, Khari Baoli and Chandni Chowk—once the most crowded parts of Delhi but now presenting a semi-deserted and mournful appearance. The Muslims gave him a rousing reception but some Hindu youths staged a hostile demonstration and even tried to stop his car. Addressing the Muslims from the balcony of a house near Pul Bangash, Gandhiji told them that if all Muslims died non-violently and bravely, Islam would become immortal. But he knew his would be regarded as a counsel of perfection. Such Muslims as wished, therefore, should be free to go to Pakistan. They had the right. But he did not wish a single Muslim to go out of fear.

At the prayer meeting in the evening, Gandhiji remarked that he was unable to accept the contention that the administration could not prevent the non-Muslims from forcibly occupying Muslim houses, evacuated or other, as a democratic Government could not use force against overwhelming public sentiment. If the people would not let the Government do the right thing, the Government should resign. Similarly, those who wanted all Muslims to be driven out of India could ask for the resignation of their Government but they must not obstruct the Government efforts or resort to lawlessness; that would be a negation of democracy.

"Let me not be told," he remarked next day, "that the departure from the ideal of healthy toleration that has of late been exhibited in India was all due to the misdeeds of the Muslim League. Was our toleration made of such poor stuff? Let us not make it easy for our critics to say that we did not deserve liberty. It hurts my pride as a lover of India's teeming millions, that our tolerant and combined culture should not be self-evident. *If India fails Asia dies. It has aptly been called the nursery of many blended cultures and civilisations. Let India be and remain the hope of all the exploited races of the earth, whether in Asia, Africa or in any other part of the world.*"

Surely it was cowardly on the part of the majority to kill or banish the minority for fear that the latter would all turn traitor. "Robust faith in oneself and brave trust of the opponent so-called or real is the best safeguard. Therefore I plead with all the earnestness at my command that Delhi should forget what Pakistan is doing. Then only can it claim the proud privilege of having broken the vicious circle of private revenge and retaliation. They belong, if they ever do, to the State, never to the citizens or individuals."

* * *

The ceaseless physical and spiritual strain since his arrival in Delhi had begun to exact its toll from Gandhiji. After a particularly agonising day, he was heard muttering in his sleep. On being asked about it, he said he had a dream that a crowd of Hindu youths had rushed into his room. One of them started abusing him and, it seemed, wanted to assault him. "I began repeating Ramanama to myself and to expostulate with him to calm him."

On another occasion when his sleep was similarly disturbed, he explained that he had been dreaming that he was surrounded by a Muslim crowd and was trying to bring home to them their duty. "Sleeping or waking I can think of nothing else."

He expressed dissatisfaction at having unquiet nights. Someone tried to argue that this only showed that his whole being was dedicated to his mission and it should, therefore, be no cause for concern. He refused to accept the plea. Complete dedication meant complete surrender and, therefore, complete detachment. Worry connoted anxiety as to the result. It was a sign of separateness from God. "If one has completely merged oneself with Him, he should be content to leave good and bad, success and failure to Him and be careful for nothing. I feel I have not attained that state and, therefore, my striving is incomplete."

One of his party was to leave for Sevagram Ashram. She asked if he had any message for anyone there. "No," replied Gandhiji. "People must now be guided by what they have assimilated of my teaching. It is not good for them always to look for guidance from me.

In fact my prayer to God now is to take me away from the bed of torture that life has become to me." To a friend he wrote: "There is no prospect of my ever returning to Sevagram."

5

For some time past Gandhiji had been suffering from a severe attack of whooping cough and flu. On the 26th September, his temperature rose to 102. But he would neither stop giving interviews nor discontinue his spinning. He turned down a suggestion that he should see no-one for at least two days saying, "What use is my life if I cannot even console the afflicted by listening to their tale of distress, since I can do nothing more for them?"

In the alternative it was proposed that the number of interviews might be restricted for the time being. But he would not hear of that either. He preferred to die in harness, he said, serving the people with his last breath.

When a visitor was ushered in, he was having a severe spasm of coughing. "See, this is how I greet you!" he joked.

In the small hours of the night he was awakened by an unusually severe spasm. "It reminds me of Ba's (Kasturba's) last illness," he muttered.

Manu tried to quiet him. "Bapu, you must not talk. Try to snatch some sleep."

Gandhiji: "I had a dream. I saw her (Kasturba) standing there (pointing his finger at vacant space). Of course I must try to sleep. (Another spasm.) But this wretched cough won't let me. Oh! if Ramanama took firm possession of my heart even this cough should not affect me."

Minutes later he was again sound asleep and woke up at half past three for the morning prayer.

He gave strict instructions that no-one was to try to administer to him alcohol or any injections of forbidden drugs to revive him in case he lost consciousness. "I would refuse to cooperate with life if anybody tried to do that. I do not wish to be kept alive anyhow. It would please me to die with my faith intact."

He declined to take even a herbal home remedy like Adulsa or the decoction of violet flowers which is generally prescribed by Ayurvedic physicians for affections of the throat.

A naturopath prescribed five things for his cough: (1) bowel wash, (2) light diet, (3) four to five pints of water to be taken daily, (4) hands and feet to be kept warm, and (5) complete rest. But the logic of his nature-cure was already beckoning him even beyond the conventional frontiers of nature-cure. Even earth and water treatment,

he said, should be unnecessary for one possessed by Ramanama. That was the advice he had given to others and it would ill become him if he himself followed another course.

The cough was the worst at night. The seizures were sometimes so frequent and prolonged that words came through with difficulty and those in attendance found it difficult to follow what he was saying. More than once he kept awake through the small hours of the night taking Ramanama. Owing to the strain of persistent coughing, there was tenderness in the abdomen and streaks of blood appeared in the sputum.

The nature-cure treatment was varied by the application of a hot mud poultice on the chest and throat to relieve the cough—his own "home-and-village" version of antiphlogistine. To prolong the fomentation, he had a hot water bag placed on the mud pack. The treatment was repeated every three hours. To this were added steam inhalations and mustard-powder hot foot-baths. He allowed a pinch of ammonium chloride to be added to his vegetable soup as an expectorant and turmeric powder to milk to sooth irritation of the throat. But the cough showed no sign of abating and the weakness increased.

Doctors pressed him to take penicillin but he refused. Ramanama was his penicillin, he said. He would prefer to fall a martyr to his researches in the science of Ramanama than a casualty to theirs.

The doctors argued: "Science has definitely established that there are specific causes for specific ailments. You eradicate the cause and the disease goes. On the other hand, anyone can be given cholera by introducing cholera germs into his system. The laws of science are inviolable."

Gandhiji: "I call this arrogance. Science has yet much to learn. It has so far touched only the hem of the garment. All illness is the result of the violation of the laws of nature, in other words, the penalty of sin against Him—since He and His law are one. Therefore, when Ramanama holds full sway, all illness vanishes. People have no idea of the full potency of Ramanama. I am out to demonstrate it. I must wish to live only to serve Him and live, therefore, through His grace alone. I have plunged into this fire to discover the science of Ramanama just as a doctor or a scientist rushes into an area where an epidemic is raging to discover the laws of physical science. I must discover or perish in the attempt."

It was decided that members of his party should attend upon him, by turn, through the night. The nurse on duty one morning had not the heart to wake him up at prayer time as he was having a quiet, restful sleep after many nights of wakefulness. He was deeply distressed. False pity was a dereliction from duty, he told her. It would have been real affection to wake him up at the appointed time.

One day when Dr. Jivraj Mehta came to examine him, with a grave demeanour Gandhiji said to him: "Doctor, I have today adopted a new physician." The doctor looked puzzled. Gandhiji laughed. After a pause he quietly added: "It is Rama."

Could Ramanama set a broken bone?—he was asked. He answered that it could do more; it could attune one completely to the divine will. Such a person would have the faith that though crippled, he could conceivably serve as a more effective instrument for the execution of His purpose than one with a whole limb and that, after all, was the *summum bonum* of life."

Gandhiji's prayer speeches were broadcast by the All-India Radio, and so was, during his illness, the cough. It was particularly troublesome in the evening and when he was in the open. Friends expressed concern over his persistent cough. Giving his reason for his refusal to take regular medical treatment, to which the prolongation of his cough was attributed by the doctors, he said that he did not doubt the efficacy of medical treatment for the cure of certain physical ailments. But he felt that in the midst of the flames that surrounded him on all sides, there was all the greater need for a burning faith in God. Hence his reliance solely on the power of Ramanama alone. He alone could enable people to put down the fire.

6

The second of October, 1947, was Gandhiji's birthday — the last to be celebrated in his lifetime. Members of his party came in the early morning to offer him their obeisances. "Bapuji," one of them remarked, "on our birthdays, it is we who touch the feet of other people and take their blessings but in your case it is the other way about. Is this fair?"

Gandhiji laughed: "The ways of Mahatmas are different! It is not my fault. You made me Mahatma, a bogus one though; so you must pay the penalty!"

He observed his birthday, as usual, by fasting, prayer and extra spinning. The fast, he explained was for self-purification, and the spinning a token of the renewal of his covenant to dedicate his being to the service of the lowliest and least in God's creation. He had turned his birthday celebration into celebration of the rebirth of the spinning-wheel. It stood for non-violence. The symbol appeared to have been lost. But he had not stopped the observance hoping that there might be at least a few scattered individuals true to the message of the wheel. It was for their sake that he allowed the celebration to continue.

A small party of intimate friends was waiting for him when he entered his room after his bath at half past eight. They included Pandit

Nehru and the Sardar, G. D. Birla — his host — and all the members of the Birla family in Delhi. Mirabehn had gaily decorated his seat by improvising in front of it an artistic cross, *He Rama* and the sacred syllable *Om* from flowers of variegated colours. A short prayer was held in which all joined. It was followed by the singing of his favourite hymn "When I survey the wond'rous Cross" and another devotional hymn of his choice in Hindi — *He Govinda Rakho Sharan.*

Visitors and friends continued to come all day to offer homage to the Father of the Nation. So also came the members of the Diplomatic Corps, some of them with greetings from their respective Governments. Lastly Lady Mountbatten arrived with a sheaf of letters and telegrams addressed to him.

His request to all was to pray that "either the present conflagration should end or He should take me away. I do not wish another birthday to overtake me in an India still in flames."

The occasion burnt itself on the memories of the visitors as one of the saddest in Gandhiji's life. "What sin must I have committed," he remarked to the Sardar, "that He should have kept me alive to witness all these horrors?"

He seemed to be consumed by the feeling of helplessness in the face of the surrounding conflagration. Recorded the Sardar's daughter, Manibehn, mournfully that day in her journal: "His anguish was unbearable. We had gone to him in elation; we returned home with a heavy heart."

After the visitors had left, he had another spasm of coughing. "I would prefer to quit this frame unless the all-healing efficacy of His name fills me," he murmured. "The desire to live for 125 years has completely vanished as a result of this continued fratricide. I do not want to be a helpless witness of it."

"So from 125 years you have come down to zero," someone put in.

"Yes, unless the conflagration ceases."

Many had come to congratulate him, he remarked at the evening prayer. He had received also scores of telegrams both from home and abroad. Flowers had been sent to him by refugees and he had received many tributes and good wishes. There, however, was nothing but agony in his heart. His was a lone voice. The cry everywhere was that they would not allow the Muslims to stay in the Indian Union. He was, therefore, utterly unable, he said, to accept any of their congratulations. Where did the congratulations come in? "Would it not be more appropriate to offer condolences?" He could not live while hatred and killing choked the atmosphere. He pleaded with the people to give up the madness that had seized them and purge their hearts of hatred.

He referred to a conversation he had had with a Sikh leader. This

friend had told him that it was quite wrong to say that Guru Govind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, had taught his followers to kill the Muslims. Instead the Guru had said that it mattered little how, where or by what name man worshipped, God was the same for everyone and, what was more, man was everywhere the same, i.e. of the same genus. "All are built in the same mould. They have the same feelings. They all die and are mingled with the same earth. Air and sun are the same for all. The Ganges does not refuse her refreshing water to a Muslim. Clouds shower their rain on all alike. It is unregenerate man alone who differentiates between himself and his fellow."

The All-India Radio had arranged a special broadcast programme in observance of his birthday. Would he not, for that once, listen to the special programme? — he was asked. "No," he replied; he preferred *rentio* (Gujarati for spinning-wheel) to radio. The hum of the spinning-wheel was sweeter. He heard in it the "still sad music of humanity".

Gandhiji refused to release for publication any of the birthday messages — telegrams or letters — which had come from all parts of the world. He had many beautiful messages from Muslim friends, too, but he felt that it was no time for their publication when the general public seemed to have ceased, for the time being at least, to believe in non-violence and truth.

The messages were noteworthy for the wide diversity of types and temperaments that found in him the symbol of some of their deepest hopes.

Lord Ismay, chief of the Viceroy's staff, joining the chorus of congratulations and good wishes "from all over the world" prayed that Gandhiji might long be spared "to lead us along the path of peace".

Lord Mountbatten, after referring to his "wonderful work for the India we all love", wrote: "You hold a unique position . . . in the eyes of the world as a whole. . . . Never has your gospel of non-violence been more needed than it is now. Long may you be spared to spread it."

A message from the High Commissioner for Pakistan in India, Zahid Husain, ran: "Today the people of India — in which I include Pakistan — are suffering untold miseries and privations resulting from hatreds and conflicts. All eyes are turned to Mahatma Gandhi in the unparallelled crisis which has overtaken the country. . . . India is in many ways a key to the future of the human race and we all hope and pray that inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi she will play her part truly and well."

"How much has happened since we celebrated it last year?" wrote Lord Pethick-Lawrence, who on the eve of the transfer of power had retired from his post of Secretary of State for India. "Neither

you nor I are of course fully satisfied with the final outcome. But international progress, like true love, never runs quite smoothly; and what has been won is infinitely greater than what has been lost. . . . I devoutly hope that the recent tragic events though they remain a scar on the fair face of India will not continue as a running sore."

In a separate note, Lady Pethick-Lawrence, who was in her 80th year, recalling that that day (2nd October) happened to be their own wedding day, too, wrote: "What an influence you have had upon the history of the world — yes, and will continue to have for years to come! . . . You told me last year that you . . . intended to celebrate your centenary! I hope with all my heart that it may be so and that every year may be more full of confident faith than the preceding one."

Sarojini Naidu was due to retire shortly from the Governorship of the United Provinces. In a note pulsating with affection and vivacity, which even her chronic invalidism could not damp, she wrote: "My days of being a she-Lat (Lady-Governor) are coming to the end . . . by the end of October and I shall be a free bird out of the cage again. . . . It is only rarely that I yield to my constant temptation to intrude on your thought or time if only as lightly and briefly as a butterfly. Today I yield both to the desire and temptation and send you one little word of greeting. . . . I am now partially convinced that I am really rather a 'sweet old lady'!"

Sir Stafford Cripps, watching from a distance the tribulation through which Gandhiji had been passing since partition and burdened perhaps with the consciousness that the British power could not be altogether absolved from a share in the tragedies that had overtaken India, wrote:

> I have purposely refrained from writing to you in the most anxious and perilous times through which you and your country —or your two countries!—have been passing. . . . All your friends in this country—and they are many—admire greatly the determined way in which you have set out to conquer the evil by good. It has been a great inspiration for all of us, who have the good of India at heart. We have been made so sad at all that has happened and we are only too conscious of the part that the past history has played in the present discontents. I pray that you may be given the strength to persevere and that by your example the evil spirit of communal faction will die down so that India and Pakistan may resume their progress towards what I shall hope may one day be the goal of unity.

* * *

The eleventh of October was Gandhiji's birthday according to the Hindu calendar. Gujaratis of Delhi had arranged a reception to

present him with a purse which they had collected to commemorate his birthday. Gandhiji was still suffering from his cold and flu but agreed to attend the meeting. When the Sardar came to take him to the meeting, he was having a spasm of whooping cough. The Sardar chaffed him: "There is no end to your greed! To collect a purse you will leave even your deathbed! All things will take care of themselves if only you take care of your cough. But you will not listen."

At the meeting the Sardar was asked to deliver a speech. "Is it my birthday that I should speak?" he asked. "He is to receive the purse and I am to do the speaking—that is most unfair!" With affectionate banter he proceeded: "See, how quickly the old man has recovered his strength to relieve you of your money in spite of his illness. Now have some mercy on him and let him rest."

"The Sardar will not miss a laugh even at the foot of the gallows," exclaimed Gandhiji.

7

Ever since Manu's operation, when he was forced to temporise with his faith in Ramanama, Gandhiji had been burning to put it into full practice in his own case. That required him to shed all desire and regard life and death as two aspects of the same thing and, therefore, equally welcome as a gift from the Maker.

This state was attainable neither by a contemptuous indifference towards life nor by a morbid hankering after death but only by ceaseless self-discipline and purification of the spirit through the fire of suffering which was to be neither shirked nor sought. He had called longevity the test and natural result of his ideal of mental equipoise and avowed his ambition to live the full span of life (125 years) in terms of that ideal. Repeated failures to attain that unruffled state had filled him with doubt as to his ability to live long. Subsequent events had taken away from him even the wish. But his ideal required him to strike for himself the golden mean between wishing and non-wishing. His self-surrender did not mean taking sanctuary in the "cloud of unknowing". It called for discriminative awareness of the highest order. It gave no absolution from ceaseless vigilance and striving to make what was surrendered fully worthy of the surrender. On that touchstone, he began to examine himself afresh.

It was true, he had said before, that detachment was more fruitful than attachment and one should, therefore, strive to work without attachment. But it was equally true, reasoned Gandhiji, that just as a tree that did not bear fruit withered, so must also his body if his service could not bear the expected fruit. It was, therefore, plain logic of facts to say that a body that had outlived its usefulness would perish giving

place to a new one. The soul was imperishable and continued to take a new form for working out its salvation through acts of service.

A French friend expostulated with Gandhiji. He had already achieved so much and after all, if God was responsible for every happening, He would bring good out of evil. Therefore Gandhiji should not feel depressed. "In my opinion this (Gandhiji's despondency) is the final attempt of the forces of evil to foil the divine plan of India's contribution to the solution of the world's distress by way of non-violence. You are today the only instrument in the world to further the divine purpose."

But Gandhiji could not, as he put it, allow himself to be deceived by kind words. No-one could live on his past, he replied. He could wish to live only if he felt that he could render service to the people, i.e. make the people see the error of their ways. He had put himself entirely in God's hands. If God wished to take further work from him, He would. But if he was not able to render more service, it would be best that God took him away.[5]

A couple of days later, he carried the argument a step further. In an article in *Harijan*, he wrote that it was wrong to describe his state of mind as one of depression. Only he was not vain enough to think that the divine purpose could be fulfilled only through him:

> It is as likely as not that a fitter instrument will be used to carry it out and that I was good enough to represent a weak nation, not a strong one. May it not be that a man purer, more courageous, more far-seeing is wanted for the final purpose? This is all speculation. No-one has the capacity to judge God. We are drops in that limitless ocean of mercy. Without doubt the ideal thing would be neither to wish to live . . . nor to wish to die. . . . Mine must be a state of complete resignation to the Divine Will.[6]

But having had the "impertinence" openly to declare his wish to live 125 years, he felt, he, in changed circumstances, must have the "humility" openly to shed that wish. "I (therefore) invoke the aid of the all-embracing Power to take me away from this 'vale of tears' rather than make me a helpless witness of the butchery by man become savage. . . . Yet I cry, 'Not my will but Thine alone shall prevail.' If He wants me, He will keep me here on this earth yet awhile."

"There is a place of peace beneath all the turmoil where spirits can meet," an English woman wrote to Gandhiji. She was not disturbed, she said, by the pronouncements that seemed to upset so many people. " 'He doesn't want to live,' they say—'he is losing faith, he advocates war' etc. But I seem to catch an echo in your words of that cry of the soul that came from Christ Himself, 'If it be Thy will let

this cup pass from me.' God knows what agony you must be passing through. I sense that much will yet be demanded of you and that the respite you sometimes crave will not come yet. If it does, I shall not grieve that you are gone. I selfishly want you to stay here with us in this terrible world, and help us. But already you have spent a lifetime of ceaseless toil and labour of love, trying to turn men's thoughts into the Way of Truth and Non-violence. . . . I have little doubt that India has touched bottom only to rise to immense heights. It is the work that you have done all these years that will show her how to rise."

She quoted from a letter that she had received from the late Mahadev Desai in 1941, when England was fighting single-handed with the Germans: "You have a terrible heavy cross to bear—not only that of bombing, homelessness and starvation, but of making ignorant people understand that we in India are friends, not enemies. It is a frightfully difficult task, I know, but you who know and understand Bapuji so well can cope with it."

To her Gandhiji replied: "The Cross of which Mahadev wrote to you years ago whilst he was yet alive was nothing compared to the Cross that presses one today."[7]

An American friend wrote to Gandhiji that it was but natural that he should feel "a degree of disillusionment" because of the sad happenings that had of late overtaken India. But that disillusionment should be measured and certainly not turn into discouragement. "Never does the seed turn directly into a beautiful fragrant flower without first going through certain phases of growth and development. And if at some stage of its development—or growth—it falters, the presence of the gardener is more than ever required."

Replying to it Gandhiji wrote in *Harijan*: "What they say may prove true and the senseless blood-bath through which India is still passing . . . may be nothing unusual as history goes. What India is passing through must be regarded as unusual, if we grant that such liberty as India has gained was a tribute to non-violence."[8] But as he had repeatedly said, he went on to say, non-violence of India's struggle was only in name, "in reality it was passive resistance of the weak. The truth of the statement we see demonstrated by the happenings in India."[9]

And again: "Hope for the future I have never lost and never will. . . . What has, however, clearly happened in my case is the discovery that in all probability there is a vital defect in my technique of the working of non-violence. There was no real appreciation of non-violence in the thirty years' struggle against British *Raj*. Therefore, the peace the masses maintained during that struggle of a generation with exemplary patience had not come from within. The pent up fury found an outlet when British *Raj* was gone. It naturally vented itself

in communal violence which was never fully absent and which was kept under suppression by the British bayonet. . . . Failure of my technique of non-violence causes no loss of faith in non-violence itself. On the contrary, that faith is, if possible, strengthened by the discovery of a possible flaw in the technique."[10]

Miss Schlesin, his devoted secretary of South African days, unable to realise her dream of rejoining him in India, had been following from distant South Africa the development of his thought and activities. She wrote: "Far from losing your desire to live until you are 125, increasing knowledge of the world's lovelessness and consequent misery should cause you rather to determine to live longer still. In view of your decision to live at least so long, your remark about fatalism is not understood—what of the *immanent* Divine, the indwelling God? You said in a letter to me some time ago that everyone *ought* to wish to attain the age of 125 —you can't go back on that."

To her Gandhiji replied: "Usually your letters are models of accurate thinking. This one before me is not. You talk of my 'decision to live 125 years'. I never could make any such foolish and impossible decision. It is beyond the capacity of a human being. He can only wish. Again, I never expressed an unconditional wish. . . . My wish was conditional upon continuous act of service of mankind. If that act fails me, as it seems to be failing in India, I must not only cease to wish to attain that age but should wish the contrary as I am doing now."[11]

The question of the discontinuation of the *Harijan* weeklies also came up for his active consideration about this time. Some correspondents wrote to him that the period of his active life should now be over. A new age for India had begun on the 15th August. There was no place for him in that age. So, why continue the three weeklies?

His reply betrayed not a trace of despondency or any decline of faith : "I detect anger in this advice. . . . My life-line is cast in active public service. I have not attained the state which is known as 'action in inaction'. My activity, therefore, seems at present to be destined to continue till the last breath. Nor is it capable of being divided into watertight compartments. The root of all lies in Truth, otherwise known to me as Non-violence. Hence the papers must continue as they are. 'One step enough for me'."[12]

Explaining what he meant by the state known as "action in inaction" he wrote: "There is a stage in life when a man does not need even to proclaim his thoughts much less to show them by outward action. Mere thoughts act. They attain that power. Then it can be said of him that his seeming inaction constitutes his action. . . . My striving is in that direction."[13]

And he presented to his readers these verses from Browning which a dear friend had sent him:

> "To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
> And baffled, get up and begin again,
> So the chase takes up one's life, that's all."

And a verse from the Old Testament:

> "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

CHAPTER XIX

BLOOD AND TEARS

1

GANDHIJI's illness proved to be long drawn out. Sheer disability forced him at last to discontinue giving interviews. But visitors still kept on coming. Some left papers and literature relating to the problems of the day for him to peruse during his enforced rest. From his vantage ground above the turmoil of elements, removed from the stresses and strains within the Government, he could take a detached and integrated view of things and give to his colleagues the benefit of his advice to help keep the ship of the State on an even keel. He laid down the dictum that the popular Ministers must never allow themselves to be tempted to act in an autocratic fashion as their British predecessors had done; they must not allow anything to happen in their regime for which they had criticised the British Government. There should be no rule by ordinance or emergency legislation, even though this might entail some delay. The executive fiat must not supersede the legislative function and everything should be done to make justice cheap, expeditious and pure. This was possible only through *panchayat raj*. A High Court could not be expected to reach everybody in a vast sub-continent like India.

By the end of September large-scale lawlessness in the capital had been brought under control. Stray incidents from time to time continued, however, to provide a warning signal that all was not well with Delhi. In the first week of October, a poor unknown Muslim passenger entering a railway compartment near Delhi excited the suspicion of the Hindu and Sikh passengers. He gave himself out as a non-Muslim but the tattoo mark on his arm betrayed him. He was stabbed and thrown into the Jumna. The incident was symptomatic of the perverse mood prevailing in the country. The bulk of the Hindu population, including the refugees from West Pakistan, were no longer inclined to take part in the pogroms against the Muslims but there was a general attitude of apathy towards stray happenings. This enabled the anti-social element to go on with their mischief unchecked.

Delhi was said to be at peace, Gandhiji remarked in the course of his post-prayer address on the 19th October, but it brought him little solace in that the peace was due to the presence of the police and the

military. There was no love lost between Hindus and Muslims. Their hearts were still estranged. Was it the silence of the grave? Should Delhi be permitted to come to such a pass?—he asked. "All eyes rest on India which has become the hope of Asia and Africa, nay the whole world. If India is to realise that hope, it has to stop the fratricide. . . . Clean hearts are the first condition of that happy state."

The same night it was reported to him that while on duty, a Muslim health officer in Delhi was butchered. The panic had spread to a point that it was difficult to gather Muslims in a sufficient number even to perform the burial according to the Muslim rites. "I very much fear it is a pointer," commented Gandhiji. A few days later a poor Muslim, hoping that things had at last settled down, went to open a spectacles shop that he owned. He was murdered as he was opening his shop. Where were the police? Where were the military? The shop was not in a wilderness.

What disturbed Gandhiji even more was that though a number of people had been arrested in connection with rioting, not a single person had been convicted or brought to book. It was reported to him that sometimes when the police made arrests, the executive authority ordered the arrested persons to be released. This was not the way to prop up the crumbling civic sense of the people. It was dangerous, he warned the people, to try to interfere with the course of law by inundating the Ministers with petitions for mercy to secure the release of the guilty ones. Clemency had a definite place in the machinery of the State but it must be exercised with due care. The proper way to secure withdrawal of cases was by means of appeal to the courts. Heinous crime did not admit of easy discharge. Nor should abstention through fear of the complainants from giving evidence be deemed sufficient ground for dropping such cases. The guilty ones must first confess their crimes and ask for mercy. Then and then only could they be pardoned with the free and willing consent of the complainants. Ministers dared not act arbitrarily; the purity of administration must be ensured at any cost.

The squeeze on the Muslims continued. It was complained that they were being forced, in one way or another, to vacate their houses and to live in camps pending their evacuation "by train or even on foot" to Pakistan. Gandhiji was sure that such was not the policy of the Union Government. Were the services disloyal then? He hoped not. Yet the complaint was universal. Various reasons were given for the alleged disloyalty. The most plausible was that the military and the police had been divided largely on a communal basis and their members were carried away by the prevalent prejudices. If so, it was for the upper ranks of those services to rise superior to communalism and then to infect the lower ranks with the same healthy spirit.

It was next argued that the popular Governments had not that "prestige" which the foreign bureaucracy, with its "steel frame", enjoyed. This was only partly true, said Gandhiji. The popular Government wielded a moral force infinitely superior to the physical force upon which ultimately the foreign Government relied. This moral force presupposed the possession of political morale that popular support gave to an indigenous Government. "It may be lacking today. There is no means of checking it save by the resignation of the Ministry at the Centre. . . . Central authority . . . must never be and, what is perhaps more important, never *feel* weak. . . . Therefore, if it is true that there is the slightest insubordination among the services, the guilty ones must go or the Ministry or the Minister in charge must resign and give place to the one who would successfully deal with official disorderliness."[1]

What was the duty of the affected citizens in the Union in the circumstances? It was clear, said Gandhiji, that there was no law that could compel a citizen to leave his place of residence. "So far as I am aware, there are no written orders issued to that effect. In the present case thousands are involved in the alleged verbal orders. There is no helping those who will be frightened into submission to any order given by a person in uniform. My emphatic advice to all such persons is that they should ask for written orders whose validity in case of doubt should be tested in a court of justice, if appeal to the final executive fails to give satisfaction."[2]

He admitted that it was difficult for the remnant of poor Muslims who had seen other Muslims slaughtered before their eyes and yet others forced to flee to Pakistan, to stick to their homes. Yet he could give them no other advice, he told them. If, with non-violence in their hearts, even a fair number of them honestly and heroically stuck to their homes in spite of the sufferings that might, for the time being, be their lot, it would melt the hardest of hearts. Then there would be certain deliverance not only for them but for many others like them in both parts of India.[3]

There was a third possibility. Could the Ministry or the Minister in charge, while professing one policy be actually conniving at its breach? It was too fearful a possibility to contemplate. Where lay the truth? Either his colleagues were betraying him or they were themselves being betrayed by their subordinates or, worse still, by one another. There was only one remedy for it: an all round purification through vicarious penance, even by self-immolation if need be.

But before he could think of resorting to that, he had to exhaust all other resources. He had to show in a practical way to his colleagues a real appreciation of their difficulties and his willingness and capacity to help them. The Governmental machine can only enforce decisions by executive action. It cannot order the hearts of the people. It lacks

the human touch. There are a number of things beyond the cumbersome leviathan's reach. Yet they can make all the difference between economy and waste, ease and discomfort, peace and discontent, in short between success and failure. He could take over that part of the business. He had a special aptitude for this kind of work. Had he not begun his "political career" in India at the turn of the century by scavenging and offering his services as a clerk and bearer to a veteran leader of the Indian National Congress, of which he later became the father? He made the refugee problem his special concern. The following excerpts will give a picture of some of the odd jobs he took up in behalf of his colleagues:

4th October, 1947

Issued an appeal for bales of cotton, calico "and a supply of needles" for distribution to destitute refugees to enable them to sew quilts for use in the coming winter.

12th October, 1947

Broadcast useful hints on life in a camp to the refugees: "Quilts could be covered (by sleepers in the open) with old newspapers at night to prevent their being wetted by dew."

28th October, 1947

To cope with the evil of ticketless travel, suggested that instead of resorting to the usual coercive remedies the railway authorities should suspend train services unless the public cooperated in eradicating the evil.

7th November, 1947

Visited the Muslims of the village Tehar near Delhi and on return conveyed to the Prime Minister and his deputy a personal request from them that they should be sent to Pakistan at an early date as most of their relatives had already migrated there.

Heard the complaint that non-Muslim refugees were making a nuisance of themselves by worrying *tongawallas* to give them free rides and the shop-keepers to give them what they wanted without charging full price or any price at all on the ground that they had lost "everything they possessed". Told them that those who claimed to have "lost their all" could not afford to make large purchases as they were reported to be making and that they should be content, except on rare occasions, to use no other means of locomotion but their God-given legs.

30th November, 1947

Broadcast a suggestion that those coming to his prayer meetings should bring with them a piece of old newspaper or a small

carpet or *asan* to spread under them so as not to catch a chill by sitting on cold or wet ground in winter.

Although he was himself short-handed and could ill spare the services of anyone from his already depleted staff, he detailed Sushila to help organise medical relief and to create sanitary living conditions in the Kurukshetra camp—one of the biggest concentrations of refugees from West Punjab.

India had her fairs—religious and other, he remarked in one of his prayer addresses, and they had their Congress sessions and conferences, but, they, as a people, lacked the sense of public sanitation. The result was dangerous filth with the attendant risk of outbreak of infectious and contagious disease. He commended to them sanitary arrangements in a military camp:

> For method, planning and almost perfect sanitation, give me a military camp. I have never recognised the necessity of the military. But that is not to say that nothing good can come out of it. It gives valuable lessons in discipline, corporate existence, sanitation and an exact time-table with due provision for every useful activity. There is almost pin-drop silence in such camps. It is a city under canvas brought into being inside of a few hours. I would like our refugee camps to approach that ideal.[4]

These camps, he further suggested, could be made quite inexpensive, provided that all work including building up of this canvas city was done by the refugees who would be their own sweepers, cleaners, road-makers, trench-diggers, cooks, washermen, etc. Then no refugee would be a burden to others wherever he went.

The winter was approaching. He, therefore, began appealing to the public for blankets, warm clothing and the like for the refugees. ("The clothes and blankets should be washed and mended if necessary before they are sent. . . . The quilts have this advantage: they can be stripped, the cloth washed, the cotton hand-loosened and the quilt refilled!") The response was immediate and overwhelming. Gifts of blankets and clothing came in an everswelling stream from as far away as Kashmir, Ceylon and Burma. Satins and furs, eider-downs and costly rugs, shawls, embroidered stuffs—even silken hangings, door curtains and bed-covers—were received by the bale. All classes vied with one another in playing the Good Samaritan. Some well-to-do families and higher orders of the gentry practically emptied their wardrobes to help the unfortunate ones.

* * *

It was Eugene Debbs who, in recent times, proclaimed that so long as there was a criminal in the world, he also was one. This

attitude of identification with the criminal instead of regarding him as an outcaste from society is not new to the Indian tradition. Three centuries before Christ, Asoka created ministers of religion whose function, *inter alia* was to "bring comfort to him who is in fetters, remove his obstacles and deliver him, because he has a family to support . . . and because he is bent with age."

Gandhiji realised one of his dearest wishes on the 25th October, when he held his prayer meeting inside the Delhi district prison. Here 3,000 prisoners had expressed the desire to meet him. He often had with gusto described himself as "a seasoned ex-prisoner". In a remarkable address after the prayer, he recalled how he had served various terms in South Africa and in India. "In South Africa there was no distinction between political and non-political prisoners. They were all criminals. All those who broke the law committed a crime against it." But in India there was "not only a distinction between political and non-political prisoners, there were again A, B and C sections amongst the politicals." This was deplorable. He had always deprecated the practice among Congressmen of asking for or accepting special privileges for themselves based upon such divisions. All men committed offences, big or small. Some were caught and put in jail. Others managed to escape detection. He recalled how the chief jailor of an Indian jail had once told him that he often thought himself to be a bigger criminal than the prisoners under him. No-one, however, observed Gandhiji, would be able to deceive, "the biggest Jailor above".

What significance had independence for these people? What message did it bring them? What should their jails be like in free India? — he asked. He had long held the opinion that all criminals should be regarded as patients needing treatment — cure. No-one committed a crime for fun. It was a sign of a diseased mind. The cause of this particular disease should be investigated and removed. The outlook of the jail staff should, therefore, be that of physicians and nurses in a hospital. The prisoners should feel that the officials were their friends to help them to regain their mental health and not to harass them in any way. The authorities had to issue necessary orders in this regard, continued Gandhiji, but, in the meantime, the jail staff could do much to humanise their administration.

Speaking as "an ex-prisoner" he advised his "fellow prisoners" to turn themselves into ideal prisoners. They should avoid breach of jail discipline. They should put their heart and soul into whatever work was entrusted to them. Whatever complaints they had should be brought to the notice of the authorities in a becoming manner. They should so behave in their little community as to become better men when they left the jail than when they entered it. That was exactly the ideal he had set before Satyagrahis who had, during India's freedom

struggle, courted imprisonment in pursuance of the civil disobedience programme, viz. to behave as "model prisoners".

Concluding, he asked them not to let the poison of communalism enter their ranks. Among them there were Hindu, Sikh and Muslim prisoners. They should all live together as friends and brothers so that when they went out they might be able to check the madness outside. He wished Muslim prisoners a happy Id which fell on the next day and hoped that the non-Muslim prisoners would do likewise.

Before leaving he, at their request, planted in the jail compound a mango sapling in commemoration of his visit.

2

Winston Churchill never forgave India her independence, which had come in spite of him, nor the Labour Government for conceding it. The distempers bred by the partition offered him a temptation too strong to resist. Indulging in one of his characteristic diatribes against India and the Labour Government, he observed that the fearful massacres which were occurring in India, were no surprise to him. With ill-concealed gusto he referred to "horrors and butcheries" perpetrated upon one another "with the ferocity of cannibals by races gifted with capacities for the highest culture" that had for generations dwelt side by side in peace under the "broad, tolerant and impartial rule of the British Crown", and predicted a "vast abridgment of the population throughout . . . the most peaceful part of the world and . . . a retrogression of civilisation throughout these enormous regions, constituting one of the most melancholy tragedies Asia has ever known."

Even in his illness Gandhiji could not allow this mischievous utterance to go unchallenged. He had said before that there was nothing in modern history to compare with the British withdrawal from India. There was, of course, the renunciation of Asoka the Good. But Asoka was incomparable and, in any case, he did not belong to the modern age. The British had risen to the occasion when they decided to break the empire and create in its place an "unseen and more glorious empire of hearts". Churchill, who was a great patriot, observed Gandhiji, was associated with that act. He, therefore, might have well refrained from saying anything that would detract from that great act. It was a pity he could not hold his peace. And if Churchill knew beforehand the fate that would befall India after she became free from British yoke, he asked, did he, for one moment pause to think that the blame belonged to the builders of the empire rather than to the "races" which, on his own showing, were "gifted with capacities for the highest culture"?[5]

Great Britain's unique action, Gandhiji went on to remark, would be judged by results. Dismemberment of India was an "unconscious invitation" to the two parts to fight among themselves. The free grant of independence to the two parts as sister Dominions seemed to taint the gift. It was useless to say that either Dominion was free to secede from the British family of nations. It was more easily said than done. He, therefore, invited Churchill to put honour before party and to strive to make the British transaction a "glorious success" instead of reducing himself to the role of a "partisan with preconceived notions".

Churchill followed this oratorical performance by another in which he prophesied that the same fate which had overtaken India would overtake Burma if independence was granted to it. Was the wish father to the thought? Gandhiji asked. Was freedom for the good only? Did not the British conception of freedom include the right to misgovern? Supposing Churchill succeeded at the next elections, would he try to undo the act and compel India to a second term of slavery? He warned that in that event they, the British, would have "to face a living wall of opposition". But it was equally true, he went on to observe, that if the people of India continued to behave like wild beasts, their dearly won independence might be lost.[6]

These outbursts of Churchill brought home to Lord Mountbatten once more the necessity of getting the British people and a section of the British Press to realise more fully the significance of the transition from India insurgent to India as the latest addition to the Commonwealth. On the eve of the transfer of power it had become a commonplace in British circles that, in the years to come, Pakistan would be the "last outpost of British Imperialism" while the Indian Union would be "anti-British".[7] There was, on the other hand, in India a strong feeling that it was the traditional British hostility towards Indian nationalism and the partisan role which the bulk of British officials had played that was largely responsible for the ultimate partition of the country, and the horrors that followed. It had caused deep resentment.

The issue of India's future relationship with Great Britain was still pending. As the Governor-General of the Indian Union, and, at the same time, a patriotic servant of the Crown, Mountbatten did not want unjust discrimination to continue to poison Britain's future relations with India and make it difficult for the latter to stay in the Commonwealth as a permanent member. With his characteristic energy, he set to work and sent his Press Attache to England specially to create favourable atmosphere for this purpose. The crises that were developing in connection with Junagadh, Kashmir and Hyderabad States, and the rising tension between India and Pakistan made this step all the more opportune.

3

So far Sind had remained comparatively quiet. But the post-partition disturbances in the two Punjabs were beginning to have their repercussions there, too.

"Marwaris and Gujaratis have all gone back to their respective homes outside Sind; where shall the poor Sindhi Hindus and Sikhs go?" Acharya Kripalani had put this challenging question to Gandhiji soon after the latter's arrival from Calcutta on the 9th September. To this Gandhiji had answered: "If I were asked, I would say, no-one should leave his hearth and home. This will put Pakistan on its trial."

Hitherto the Acharya had himself been of the same view. Sind was a notable seat of Sufi mysticism. It had achieved a fine synthesis of Hindu and Muslim cultures of which it was proud. It had a rich tradition of religious toleration. In the Acharya's own family there were members of both the faiths. In one of his addresses at Karachi, he had publicly advised the Hindus of Sind not to think in terms of an exodus. Even at the risk of being misunderstood he had told them that they might not be welcomed in the Indian Union as the Muslims from India were in Pakistan.

Another Sind Congress leader, Professor N. R. Malkani, summed up his creed after the establishment of Pakistan as follows:

> I do not reject Pakistan. I shall live in Sind and Pakistan, for Sind is my homeland. I shall, therefore, not be disloyal to Pakistan. I shall try and make it a good and strong State. I shall not try to weaken it and in no case shall I be its saboteur.
>
> Being a Sindhi and a Pakistani, I shall claim the full rights of citizenship for I have become a Pakistani as anyone else. . . . If necessary I shall fight for these rights of a Pakistani in Pakistan and a Sindhi in Sind.
>
> In Sind I am a Sindhi as much as any Muslim. . . . The heart of rural Sind is yet sound. The average Sindhi Muslim is a nice, hearty, unsophisticated fellow. . . . I look with great anxiety to the influx of Punjabis and others . . . into Sind. . . .
>
> I shall no more hoist the Indian flag old or new. I shall roll it up and keep it as a sacred memory in the secret recess of my heart. I shall accept the Pakistan flag as the State flag. . . . But I will not hoist . . . a flag on my house . . . until it endears itself to me. . . .
>
> If I am refused full rights of citizenship . . . I shall resist openly and when I find my resistance vain and life here dishonourable then I will leave Pakistan and my Sind and induce others to do the same. I hope that evil day will never come.[8]

But circumstances proved too strong for them.

In a penetrating analysis of the Muslim aspirations embodied in the Pakistan slogan, Mr. R. G. Casey, in his book *An Australian in India*, wrote:

> I believe, when the Muslims in a village or a small town think of Pakistan, they think in terms of the little village or town store being owned by a Muslim and not by a Hindu. When the city Muslim thinks of Pakistan, I believe he thinks largely in terms of the mills and shops and business houses being owned by Muslims instead of by Hindus. . . . But the fact remains that . . Pakistan would not result in the village store being owned by a Muslim. It would not put the mills and the business houses into Muslim hands. The only way that the Muslims can advance themselves economically is to achieve education and to learn how to compete successfully with the Hindus, which means a vast amount of hard work and the passage of time. It cannot be achieved quickly or by political means.

Pakistan *was*, however, envisaged by the bulk of the Muslim League leaders and those who had supported the Pakistan demand just as a political shortcut to prosperity and personal power; and since that desideratum could not be achieved except by discrimination and worse, these were freely resorted to. In West Punjab and later in East Bengal, the process was blanketed by the communal mass upheavals. But in Sind, where there were no major communal disturbances, squeeze, expropriation and even naked plunder came to be looked upon by the authorities as the natural "economic consequence" of the fulfilment of the dream that was Pakistan. Ordinances were promulgated for requisitioning for Government purposes non-Muslim buildings and building materials. Refugees forcibly entered into and occupied the houses of the members of the minority community during their absence. Hardly any member of the minority community was immune. Sometimes they were made to share their residences with Muslim refugees, at other times they were forced out of their homes by threats and intimidation. The authorities turned the blind eye to cases of trespass into private residences accompanied by insult and molestation, arson and loot.

In the streets of Karachi, Hyderabad and other cities of Sind, non-Muslims were seen in Muslim clothes when out on business. For safety's sake some flaunted an issue of the *Dawn* or some other Muslim League paper which they might not even be able to read.[9]

Particularly pitiable was the plight of Harijans. They were required to wear badges on their persons to show that they were untouchables—on the plausible ground that this was for their safety. Sweepers

and washermen were not permitted to leave Sind under the "Essential Services Ordinance". From the interior came reports of forcible conversion to Islam from the lower classes—particularly Harijans.

Later, refugees from East Punjab and other parts of India streamed into Sind. They provided the rougher element. As their number increased, the Pakistan authorities found themselves unable to keep them under control and scenes reminiscent of some of the worst happenings in the West Punjab, and the Frontier Province, were re-enacted on a fairly extensive scale. There was panic and a stampede to get away before the mousetrap closed upon them. At the border the outgoing refugees were stripped of whatever they possessed. Reports of extortion, bribery and blackmail, border searches and insult to women filled the Press.

Towards the close of September, Acharya Kripalani, the Congress President, had met Jinnah at Karachi and drawn his attention to the rapidly deteriorating position of the minority community in Sind. In reply he got only a long tirade against the Indian Union Government. The minority community in Sind, Jinnah maintained, had nothing to complain of. They had not taken kindly to the establishment of Pakistan, that was all. The sooner they became reconciled to their changed status the better for them. The Pakistan Government had nothing to answer for. On the contrary it was the innocent victim of wanton and malicious exaggeration by the Indian Press.

In reply to a question by Acharya Kripalani whether, in the circumstances, it would not be better to work for a planned exodus of non-Muslims from Sind instead of allowing them to be squeezed out and turned upon India as homeless destitutes, Gandhiji replied that his opposition to a permanent exchange of populations remained as strong as ever. After what the Acharya had told him, he said, he, in fact, felt all the more strongly that the place of Sind Congress leaders in that juncture was in Sind. They should go there, and, if necessary, die there and by their example teach the non-Muslims to meet with courage, faith and self-respect the crisis that faced them.

He freely confessed that he had little hope of being able to get the Pakistan authorities to do the right thing. But if normality was restored in Delhi, he said, he would go to the Punjab and Sind and demonstrate to the Sind Congress leaders what he was asking them to do. "I fancy I know the art of living and dying non-violently. BUT I HAVE YET TO DEMONSTRATE IT BY ONE PERFECT ACT."

The complacency of persons on whom rested the moral responsibility of bringing about partition disturbed Gandhiji. Pakistan authorities were flagrantly contravening the canons of elementary justice, morality and fairplay. In the face of this the Union Government felt helpless. Partition, Gandhiji pointed out, had been effected on certain conditions. If these conditions continued to be openly violated by

Pakistan, leaving the minorities no choice but either to submit to a denial of their fundamental rights as Pakistan's nationals and their rights as human beings, or to go out of Pakistan, and if their exodus into the Indian Union in consequences continued unchecked, the very basis would be knocked out of the partition and war between the two parts would be the inevitable result whether they in the Indian Union wished it or not. They were fast heading for that catastrophe. Gandhiji felt, before it was too late, he must sound the alarm.

At his prayer meeting on the 26th September, he remarked that he had always been an opponent of all warfare. But if there was no other way of securing justice from Pakistan, if Pakistan persistently refused to see its proved error and continued to minimise it, war would be the only alternative left to Government. War was no joke. That way lay destruction. But he could never advise anyone to put up with injustice. If all the Hindus were annihilated for a just cause, he would not mind it. True, his own way was different; he worshipped God which was truth and non-violence. But then he was not the Government.

Gandhiji's remarks about the possibility of war between the two Dominions, if Pakistan did not mend its ways, raised quite a storm. There were anxious telegrams. Friends in India and abroad asked whether he had really begun to advocate war. Even Mountbatten felt perturbed. But Gandhiji stuck to his position. Wedded to non-violence for all time as he was, he said, he was the last person to advocate war. But he knew that Governments which possessed arms and armies could not act in any other way. It was no use ostrichwise burying one's head in the sand. It was that attitude in the face of spreading political violence that had brought them to their present pass. Partition and its aftermath were the evil legacy of that policy. The logic of the British Government's attitude was understandable as they were due shortly to leave. But the Union Government could only bring disaster upon itself if it tried to copy the British in that respect.

> We have among us the superstition that mere mention of a snake ensures its appearance in the house in which the mention is made even by a child. I hope no-one in India entertains such superstition about war. I claim that I rendered a service to both the sister States by examining the present situation and definitely stating when the cause of war could arise between the two States. This was done not to promote war but to avoid it as far as possible.
>
> I endeavoured, too, to show that if the insensate murders, loot and arson by people continued, they would force the hands of their Governments. Was it wrong to draw public attention to the logical steps that inevitably followed one after another? India knows, the world should, that every ounce of my energy has been and is being devoted to the definite avoidance of fratricide

culminating in war. When a man vowed to non-violence as the law governing human beings dares to refer to war, he can only do it so as to strain every nerve to avoid it.[10]

A correspondent remonstrated: "It would be well not to discuss *even* by way of a joke the possibility of war between our two States." Gandhiji replied that it was undoubtedly true that the possibility of a war between the two States should not be discussed by way of a joke. But if the possibility were a reality, "it would be a duty to discuss it . . . folly not to do so."[11]

This raised the question of the loyalty of the minorities on either side to the respective States under which partition had placed them and which regarded with a suspicious eye their profession of allegiance. Gandhiji had previously said that in the event of war between the two Dominions, the Muslims of the Union should fight against those of Pakistan. Did it mean, Gandhiji's correspondent asked, that the Hindus and other non-Muslims of Pakistan would have to do likewise? "Now if such a war arises out of the communal question, no argument is likely to make the Muslims of the Union fight those of Pakistan and likewise the Hindus and the Sikhs of Pakistan." What had Gandhiji to say to that?

Gandhiji replied that it was true that loyalty could not be evoked to order but surely there was nothing to laugh at in conceiving such a possibility. "*The Muslims of the Union will fight those of Pakistan when they regard it as a duty, in other words, when it is clear to them that they are being fairly treated in the Union and that the non-Muslims are not so treated in Pakistan.* Such a state is not beyond the range of possibility. (Italics mine).

"Similarly, if the non-Muslims of Pakistan clearly feel that they are being fairly treated there and that they can reside there in safety and yet the Hindus of the Union maltreat the minorities, the minorities of Pakistan will naturally fight the majority in the Union. Then the minorities will not need any argument to induce them to do their duty.

"It has been repeatedly asked whether in the event of a war between the two, the Muslims of the Union will fight against the Muslims of Pakistan and the Hindus of one against those of the other. . . . There is nothing inherently impossible in the conception. There is any day more risk in distrusting the profession of loyalty than in trusting it and courageously facing the danger of trusting. The question can be more convincingly put in this way: *Will the Hindus ever fight the Hindus and the Muslims their co-religionists for the sake of truth and justice? It can be answered by a counter-question: Does not history provide such instances?*"[12] (Italics mine).

As with nationalism and Swadeshi so with the concept of loyalty

to one's country it took a new meaning and content in the context of Gandhiji's ideal of Satyagraha. It meant refusal to give unto Caesar the things that belong to God. If one's country commits a wrong, truly to be loyal to it one must resist it even by one's life, if necessary.

4

Shaheed Suhrawardy had joined Gandhiji soon after his arrival in Delhi. But his arrival had not brought to Gandhiji's elbow the strength that many had expected. Gandhiji knew human nature too well to be put off by any such thing. Shaheed had shown great courage and endurance when renouncing the comfort of his home he had come to stay with him and made common cause with him for the restoration of peace in Calcutta. But Delhi was not Calcutta. With Delhi Muslims, Shaheed had nothing like the influence he wielded over the Muslims of Bengal. There was, besides, a radical difference between his temperament and Gandhiji's. This could not be bridged at one stroke. Time alone could do that. Gandhiji did not try to force the pace and left Shaheed to watch, study and absorb from him whatever he could in the natural course.

Shaheed took upon himself the mission of bringing about a rapprochement between the two Dominions. Gandhiji tried to impress upon him that the crux of the problem was that both Governments should make a clean breast of their mistakes and failures. They should honestly and sincerely strive to bring about conditions, each in its own Dominion, that would enable all the refugees to go back to their original homes with a guarantee of safety and equal treatment. What was actually happening in either Dominion was forcible evacuation of the minorities without compensation or any of the guarantees that go with a planned transfer of populations on a reciprocal basis. As a result the refugees had begun to take the law into their own hands and squeeze out the minorities from the respective Dominions. Pressure was being put upon the Union Government to apply reciprocity to the Indian Muslims. This could easily lead to a war between the two countries as the Pakistan Government had already declared that they would permit refugees from East Punjab to come over but would resist the entry into Pakistan of Muslims from other parts of India.[13]

Due to his old associations with the Pakistan leaders, Shaheed possessed a certain initial advantage which he could turn to good account, if he set about the business in the right spirit and in the right way. Gandhiji told him that he should go to Karachi only if his own heart was free of all prejudice. His usefulness would depend upon his ability courageously to get his old colleague Quaid-i-Azam to face up to his own declarations respecting the minorities which were being

honoured more in the breach than the observance. If Shaheed himself lacked the conviction or his own mind was clouded, his visit would do more harm than good. Thus briefed he left for Karachi.

After a preliminary discussion with the Pakistan leaders at Lahore, on the 21st September, Suhrawardy addressed to Gandhiji a series of six "Bulletins". In one of these he reported:

> Both (Sir) Ghulam Mohammad and Liaquat Ali Khan agree with my draft. It now remains to promote a conference (after I have seen the Quaid-i-Azam) with him and Mountbatten, Nehru and Liaquat Ali, Baldev Singh, Tara Singh and Kartar Singh, Patel and yourself (Ghulam Mohammad thinks I should be there too) to draft the terms of contrition and future conduct. . . . I am glad to find that the two agree with the "contrition", no interchange of population (except for the Punjab where it has taken place, and no power on earth can stop it—I shall write later about it, as I think Hindus and Muslims can get together, the Sikhs appear to be impossible), and a determined effort to get back the refugees (except for the Punjab Sikhs).

"Have you returned as the King of the forest or as a jackal?" Gandhiji with his usual banter asked Shaheed on his return.

Shaheed: "Sir, only as a mouse. The mouse is a very discreet creature."

Gandhiji: "Now, listen. Once there was a lion. He got caught in a hunter's net. A mouse Pursued by an owl from above and a mongoose from below also ran into the net. 'You give me protection, I shall set you free,' the mouse proposed to the lion. The lion agreed. The bargain was struck. The mongoose scuttled away. But the round, shining eyes of the owl were still rivetted on his prey. 'When are you going to begin?' the lion impatiently asked the mouse. 'Where is the hurry?' the cunning mouse replied. 'I shall set you free when the hunter appears on the scene.' And instead of setting the lion free, it crouched under his fur and had a quiet nap! The lion was furious but what could he do? When the hunter appeared on the scene, the mouse unhurriedly gnawed at the net strings and before the enraged lion could do anything away the cunning creature scuttled for its own hole."[14]

The story had got a little mixed up in telling perhaps owing to a temperature of 102 degrees that Gandhiji was running. But this made hardly any difference to the redoubtable Shaheed, who, moreover was not very interested in didactic fables. Gandhiji continued: "You know 'wily whiskers' is a very treacherous creature. It bites you unawares while you are asleep. It is only when the blood comes out that you know of its presence. Is that how you are going to act?"

But Shaheed was not the one to cry "mercy". Without turning a hair, he replied: "Sir, you know everything. So what can I say?"

A few days later, in the first week of October, Suhrawardy made another trip to Karachi to meet Jinnah with his draft proposals which Gandhiji had approved. Jinnah told him that he had allowed himself to be bamboozled by Gandhiji. The result was a *volte-face.*

Suhrawardy: "Today I shall have to tell you some bitter truths."

Gandhiji (laughing): "Lay on; I am ready."

Suhrawardy: "Jinnah says I have allowed myself to be taken in by you."

Gandhiji: "There cannot be a worse libel on me. You should know that I am incapable of deceiving anybody or wishing anybody ill."

Suhrawardy: "Jinnah speaks very highly of Pandit Nehru."

Gandhiji: "May be. He has never done so in public. But that is neither here nor there. Neither Pandit Nehru nor the Sardar cares for praise or blame. If only you could get Jinnah to do the right thing, peace between the two Dominions might return."

Suhrawardy: "Jinnah says he has never asked the Hindus to go out of Pakistan."

Gandhiji: "You surprise me. Why do you not speak out to Jinnah and Liaquat Ali? You know the facts. Does not your 'peace mission' require you to uphold truth and justice fearlessly and courageously at any cost?"

Suhrawardy: "You do not know how unpopular with the masses the Pakistan Government has become. Some are even abusing Jinnah and Liaquat Ali."

Gandhiji: "That is neither my concern nor yours. Your mission to Karachi was not to report who is abusing whom but to put the facts as you know them before Jinnah and ask him what he proposes to do to implement the agreements which the two Dominions have entered into. The minorities on both sides should be able to live in their original homes. The main thing is to get the Pakistan Government to square their declarations with their performance."

In a letter to Jinnah two days later (11th October) Gandhiji wrote: "Shaheed Saheb has reported to me your reactions to my endorsement on the suggestions drafted by him. I am sorry to learn about it. . . . In my opinion some such agreement as suggested by Shaheed Saheb should precede any move for hearty cooperation between the two States. What is wanted no doubt is like mind, like word and like action between the two."

No reply to this letter seems to have been received. At any rate there is no record.

* * *

In the last week of October, a friend who had been to Lahore reported to Gandhiji: "Searches, loot and harassment of Hindus who were discovered . . . on the roads, and even stabbing incidents were the order of the day. . . . The Government . . . were doing their best to prevent the people from resorting to these tactics but the lower officials . . . disregarded the orders. . . . I found . . . that goods worth a lakh of rupees were sold out for not more than Rs. 5,000. It looked as if the proceeds were divided on the basis of 50:50 between the police and the goondas. No Hindu was safe in walking along the streets or even driving in a car. The Afridis and Mahsuds lay in ambush and either with knives, if they were nearby, or with long range shots killed the passers-by. . . . Even the Deputy High Commissioner (of the Indian Union) and his son confined themselves to their own premises and did not venture to come out. The lives of the Sikhs were more in demand than those of the Hindus."[15]

Mian Mumtaz Daultana, a Minister of the West Punjab Cabinet, whom this friend saw at Lahore, referred to "the spirit of disobedience and defiance of orders of the top people among the lower services." He admitted, this friend reported, the need for strong action to check their doings. In some cases disciplinary action was taken. But these facts, it was explained, could not be published "for fear of the masses revolting against the Government."

The Pakistan Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, like the other Ministers of the West Punjab Cabinet, was "full of praise" for both Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru for what they had achieved in Delhi:

> I pointed out to him that but for Gandhiji's presence and the remarkable courage displayed by Jawaharlalji the Muslims in Delhi would have been practically wiped out. . . . Not a single Muslim leader including the Governor-General (of Pakistan) had ever given, even on a small scale, any exhibition of that type of courage with the result that their behaviour had given rise to a legitimate suspicion among the people of the Indian Dominion that either they were conniving at or were encouraging the actions of the hooligans. Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan . . . admitted that the example of Gandhiji and Panditji was not emulated by the Muslim leaders for the simple reason that the Sikhs . . . had so enraged the Muslim population that any attempt to interfere with their determination to retaliate would have created a misunderstanding about the Muslim leaders. I suggested that Panditji never considered the opposition of the ignorant crowd as a barrier against his determination to stick to his ideal of non-retaliation and of establishing friendly relations between the two people. He admitted this fact . . . and went so far as to assert that for bringing about better relations of the Hindus and Muslims, it was

necessary to take immediate steps to end lawlessness with a firm hand and to establish confidence among the Hindus; so far as the Sikhs were concerned it was impossible to tolerate them.

He further reported that the Pakistan Government would be prepared to let the Hindu refugees come back and resume business, but the Sikhs could not be permitted to return "at least for a few years".

Presenting the other side of the medal, the report continued: "About a dozen young Muslims came to see me consecutively for two days. . . . They were originally Muslim Leaguers, but after seeing the turn that events had taken *they felt very remorseful that they should have lent their hand in placing Jinnah in his present glamorous position. They were full of praise not only for Gandhiji and Panditji but also for Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who they thought was a more real representative of Islam than Jinnah.* During the course of their talks I could notice a complete revulsion of feeling. . . . They could not tolerate the kind of rule that existed in West Punjab. Eventually it was decided that a Youth League within the Muslim League should be formed with the sole object of creating better understanding between the two communities. The organisation was formed." (Italics mine).

The attitude of Gandhiji, Panditji and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the report concluded, had created a most favourable impression: "I am of opinion that if this attitude is kept up and if the seal of the Cabinet approval was obtained, then it would be possible for us to mobilise the . . . feelings (in Pakistan) to the permanent advantage of . . . India as a whole. If, on the other hand, this policy is not endorsed by the Cabinet, and that of wholesale transfer is insisted on, . . . I see a great dark future for India and a terrible disturbance to the future peace of the world."

Gandhiji had been bending every fibre of his being to this end. He had no doubt that on its merits the Government of India would whole-heartedly endorse that policy. The difficulty was that the pitch had been queered by the actions and utterances of Jinnah and the Pakistan Government. Even in his appeal for funds for the rehabilitation of the refugees, Jinnah thought it fit to deliver himself thiswise: "Sufferings that have been inflicted on our people in . . . various . . . parts of the Dominion of India have few parallels in their extent."[16] There was not a word of regret or remorse for what the non-Muslim subjects of Pakistan had suffered and continued to suffer at Muslim hands. The language was not one of friendliness towards the non-Muslim minorities of Pakistan, or the Indian Union.

The fact is that even at that early stage the new-born State of Pakistan and its founder Quaid-i-Azam had become a bundle of paradoxes. Pakistan was conceived as a "homeland" for the Muslims. But when it came into being, the Pakistan Prime Minister had to declare

that they would not admit into Pakistan Muslims of any part of India other than East Punjab. Quaid-i-Azam was already showing symptoms of that deep physical and spiritual ailment which within three months of the founding of Pakistan had robbed him of his debonair self-assurance and stamped him with a "paralysing inability to make even the smallest decisions . . . sullen silences . . . striped with outbursts of irritation . . . a spiritual numbness concealing something close to panic underneath."[17] He found himself at the mercy of self-seeking opportunists and reactionaries who having helped him to bring Pakistan into being now demanded their pound of flesh. The logic of his past actions, however, drove him to suppress those whose character and integrity he valued, and which could have helped him to set his own house in order but, who, on account of their very integrity, could not bring themselves to join his political organisation. A liberal and progressive by temperament and conviction, he was fated to father a *Shariat*-based theocratic State and to walk with, and even to conform to, the ways of orthodox fanatical Mullahs and political obscurantists about whom he used to confide to the elder Pandit, Pandit Nehru's father: "Pandit, I believe in none of their nonsense but somehow I have to carry these fools along!" On all accounts, Jinnah in the winter of 1947-48 was a very sick man — a prisoner of the passions and forces which he had himself raised and could no longer control. "Far from happy", essentially a frightened man "trying to exorcise his fears by nourishing his hatreds" were some of the descriptions given of him by those who met him soon after he became the Governor-General of Pakistan.[18]

* * *

Suhrawardy continued his efforts but without any apparent result. The condition of success was his ability to stand up to Jinnah. This he could not bring himself to do. After one of Shaheed's abortive visits to Karachi, in the last week of October, Gandhiji, on his day of silence, scribbled this: "I am at a loss to understand what Pakistan really wants to do — whether they want the Hindus to stay there or not. . . . Please remember that to the minorities this is a life and death question. Fine phrases or impressive declarations on paper will not help. If you can get the Pakistan authorities to implement its declarations in action, you will have rendered the greatest service to the Indian Muslims. It is my claim that though many heinous things have happened in the Indian Union, the Union Government has spared no effort to ensure complete security and protection to the Muslims. . . . The Sardar and Pandit Nehru have worn themselves out in putting down lawlessness. . . . You do not know how ill the Sardar is. Yet he carries on by his iron will. I do not know what the policy of the Pakistan Government is, but I know what is happening to the

minorities in Pakistan—in the Punjab, in Sind and in the Frontier Province. . . . But I have faith. I have thrown myself entirely on Him, so I am at peace."

A letter followed:

New Delhi,
27th October, 1947

My dear Shaheed,

I address you frankly. I would like you, if you can, to remove your angularity. If you think you have none, I withdraw my remarks.

Hindus and Muslims are not two nations. Muslims never shall be slaves of Hindus nor Hindus of Muslims. Hence you and I have to die in the attempt to make them live together as friends and brothers, which they are. Whatever others may say, you and I have to regard Sikhs and others as part of India. If anyone of them declines, it is their concern.

I cannot escape the conclusion that the mischief commenced with Quaid-i-Azam and still continues. This I say more to make myself clear to you than to correct you. I have only one course — to do or die in the attempt to make the two one.

Yours,
Bapu

Shaheed complained that nobody trusted him in the Indian Union. Gandhiji told him that the only way for him to vindicate his good faith was sincerely and boldly to condemn the wrong policies and actions of Pakistan. This he himself did not deny. There was, for instance, the invasion by tribesmen of Kashmir. Either Pakistan was behind it, as all circumstantial evidence went to show, or it was not. If Pakistan was involved in it, was it not his duty as an Indian national to proclaim his conviction? On the other hand, if even in the face of the organised forces in such strength in Kashmir, Shaheed maintained that Pakistan had no hand in it, was it not up to him to try to find out who was actually responsible for it? "I suggest to you that it is your duty to ascertain the truth. Nothing would please me more than to find that I was wrong and you were right."

Shaheed diplomatically agreed to everything in principle but did nothing to follow it up by action. After one such infructuous talk with him, Gandhiji remarked that although he was afraid that Shaheed was not being of any use to either India or Pakistan, he did not want to give him up. "He has undoubted talent. He could render great service to the Indian Union, whose citizen he claims to be, and to the Indian Muslims if he had the will. But that will is completely lacking. I have, however, faith."

People warned Gandhiji that by allowing him to be near all the time he was allowing Shaheed to spy upon him and the Union Government. Gandhiji replied that he did not mind being spied upon. He had no secrets to hide. In fact he wanted Shaheed to keep a close watch not only upon him but also upon those who came to him and then report to Jinnah what he saw.

"He has not changed his spots," Gandhiji said to me when I rejoined him in December, 1947. "But I continue to nurse him." His affection for Shaheed had not diminished. Knowledge of Shaheed's failings had, in fact, brought Shaheed even closer to him. It was no longer a purely political association as to begin with it was at Calcutta. Shaheed referred to him even his intimate personal problems and Gandhiji was glad to help him with his best advice. The following was written only a few days before his death:

New Delhi,
21st January, 1948
(Early morning)

My dear Shaheed,

I was much concerned about your financial obligations. This letter is the measure of my concern. I have seen many Muslim friends go under because of their extravagant habits. Do not say you are no better than Hindus etc. The remedies you suggest are worse than the disease. I would like you to do what I have induced my Muslim clients to do to their credit. Thereby they gained in self-esteem and in the esteem of their friends. Honourable insolvency is the straight line. Of this more when you return from Sind and if you would then discuss the thing with me. In politics you have much to correct, if I am right. The Sardar is not bad. Love.

Yours,
Bapu

5

In the meantime Junagadh was warming up. The State had a total area of some 3,300 square miles. Of its seven hundred thousand inhabitants 82 per cent. were Hindus. It was ruled, with the help of Muslim advisers, by a Nawab whose main interest in life was motor cars, polo ponies and dogs, over which he spent fabulous sums from the State revenue. He was one of the three rulers in the Indian Union that had not yet decided the question of accession when the transfer of power took place. His State was surrounded on all sides by other Kathiawad States that had acceded to India, with patches of it sprinkled

like little islands inside their territory without any direct means of inter-communication.

In May, 1947, a few weeks prior to the transfer of power, Shah Nawaz Bhutto, a Muslim Leaguer from Karachi, had been installed as Diwan. He soon made himself all powerful and opened secret negotiations with Jinnah for Junagadh's accession to Pakistan. On the 17th August, only two days after the transfer of power, it was suddenly learnt that the Nawab had acceded to Pakistan. Neither His Highness nor his Diwan had consulted the wishes of his subjects who were overwhelmingly in favour of joining the Indian Union. The Nawab had gone against the advice of his brother Princes of Kathiawad though he had previously declared that he would firmly stand by them in the matter of the accession policy. The accession to Pakistan was in violation, too, of the principle of geographical contiguity which the leaders of both Pakistan and the Indian Union had accepted.

The India Government asked the Pakistan Government to define its attitude *vis-a-vis* Junagadh's accession to Pakistan but the latter gave no reply in spite of repeated reminders. The ominous silence was broken on the 13th September, when Karachi ultimately informed the Indian Government that they had accepted Junagadh's accession.

The Sheikh of Mangrol and the principality of Babariawad used to be vassals of Junagadh under the British rule. On the 19th September, Mangrol broke away from his "suzerain" and acceded to India. Within twenty-four hours, he was, however, forced by Junagadh to renounce the accession. Having forced Mangrol to retract, Junagadh next sent its forces into Babariawad, which had acceded to India earlier. The use of *force majeure* by Junagadh against two of the neighbouring States in assertion of a claim which after the lapse of Paramountcy was dead as dodo perturbed the brother Princes of Kathiawad. They appealed to the Indian Union Government to interfere. Before taking any action, however, the Indian Government addressed a note to Pakistan to order Junagadh to withdraw its forces from the States of Mangrol and Babariawad, both of which had acceded to India. After three weeks of correspondence, the Pakistan Government agreed to the withdrawal but no action followed.

Consequent upon Junagadh's accession to Pakistan, a movement for setting up a "Provisional Government" on behalf of the people of Junagadh began to gather momentum in Kathiawad in the third week of September, 1947. Gandhiji was asked by a friend if he expected it to remain strictly non-violent, as he defined non-violence. Gandhiji replied he was afraid not. A single look at the chief organiser of the movement ("His Provisional Highness") with a sword dangling from his waist was enough to belie any such expectation; but he would continue to hope against hope.

To another valued worker from Kathiawad, who came to see

him at Delhi, Gandhiji said that he had not the shadow of a doubt that if the people of Junagadh organised themselves non-violently and decided that they would refuse to acknowledge any authority that did not represent their will, the ruler must bow to their decision. "What is more, Junagadh can, in this way, blaze the trail for the Kashmir National Conference to follow and thus provide an automatic solution to the Kashmir question as well."

The friend was apologetic. He was not sure if non-violence as defined by Gandhiji would prove effective in the prevailing circumstances. Gandhiji felt sorry but told him that there was no need to be apologetic. In democracy everybody was free to act as he felt prompted; non-violence was not a thing that could be imposed on anyone.

* * *

On the 1st November, and a week after the sack of Kashmir by Pakistan-backed tribesmen, Indian forces entered both Mangrol and Babariawad. The people's movement was all the time spreading in Junagadh. The State was not getting any provisions as the merchants had organised a boycott. The forces of the "Provisional Government" were on the move capturing position after position.

The Diwan of Junagadh, reading the writing on the wall, on the 8th November, formally invited the Indian Government, pending settlement of the issues involved in the State's accession, to take over the administration of the State in order to save it from a complete breakdown. At the same time he informed the Prime Minister of Pakistan that he had taken that step with the support of public opinion, the authority of the State Council and of the Nawab himself, who had flown a few days earlier to Karachi with his Begums and jwellery.

In the meantime the emissaries of the Diwan had come and met Gandhiji at Delhi and made their report to their chief who, on the 8th November, wired:

> Very grateful for granting interview to our representatives. We accept your advice. Being pressed by the circumstances, we have asked Regional Commissioner, Rajkot, to assist in preserving law and order and avoiding bloodshed against aggressive elements from outside without prejudice to honourable settlement of issues involved. His Highness from Karachi wires to avoid bloodshed at any cost of his beloved subjects and has invited me to meet him at once at Karachi to discuss situation.

The Government of India accepted the request and asked their Regional Commissioner at Rajkot to take over charge of the State administration. But before the Regional Commissioner could take

over, Bhutto joined the Nawab at Karachi and from there began to denounce the taking over of the Junagadh administration by the Government of India as "illegal"!

The Pakistan Government had justified the Nawab when he flouted his people's will but now when he was obliged to respect their will it repudiated his action. It declared that after Junagadh's accession to Pakistan neither the ruler nor the Diwan of Junagadh was legally entitled to negotiate any settlement, temporary or permanent, with the Dominion of India. It characterised the action of the Government of India as "a clear violation of the Pakistan territory and a breach of international law."

Gandhiji set forth his own attitude on the Junagadh issue in his prayer address on the 11th November. He had all along maintained, he observed, that in free India the whole country belonged to the people, none of it belonged to Princes *as individuals*. Accession to Pakistan by the Junagadh Nawab against the wishes of his people was, therefore, *ab initio* void. There was no "unlawfulness" about the movement of the provisional Government on behalf of the people of Junagadh or about the Union Government lending the services of its troops for the preservation of the peace in Kathiawad. As for the question of Junagadh's accession, it would be decided by a referendum.

The plebiscite was accordingly held in February, 1948. The count showed that out of the total votes polled 190,779 were in favour of accession to India; only 91 for Pakistan. As a matter of fact, there never had been any question as to the people's verdict. Pakistan refused to accept the validity of the plebiscite and continued to nurse it as a grievance against the India Government.

Gandhiji's hope that the people of Junagadh would rise to the occasion and set an example in non-violent organisation to the other States did not materialise. Communalist groups like the R. S. S., which by and large were behind the killings in Delhi and elsewhere, had unfortunately obtained a foothold in Kathiawad, too, and there was some killing, arson and loot in Junagadh before it could be brought under control. The Union Government took prompt action but the mischief had been done.

Following these events the exodus, on a fair scale, of the Muslim mercantile and business community from Kathiawad took place. It spilled into Sind, where in the beginning the authorities were anxious that non-Muslims should stay as they provided the bulk of the business talent. Without them Sind's economy, it was feared, would collapse. The arrival from Kathiawad of these refugees, who in astuteness and business acumen were reputed to be a match for any in India, took away from the Pakistan authorities this incentive and hastened the tempo of evacuation of the minorities from that Province.

According to his habit Gandhiji lost no time in condemning in the plainest language possible the alleged communal excesses in Kathiawad. Some of Gandhiji's friends complained that his public reference to unverified reports from Muslim sources had provided Pakistan with a handle which Pakistan would not fail unscrupulously to use in its propaganda against the Indian Union. Before the lie was overtaken and exposed it would have done incalculable harm.

He was not unaware of the danger, replied Gandhiji, but that made no difference to him. "Each time it has been tried, it has failed miserably and the unscrupulous party has been discredited."[19] If he had ignored the charges made in influential Pakistan journals backed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, he explained, his indifference would have resulted in the Muslim world giving credence to the reports as if they were gospel truth. "Now the best Muslim mind is already sceptical about the truth. . . . We should never make the mistake of thinking that we never make any mistakes. The bitterest critic is bitter because he has some grudge, fancied or real, against us. We shall set him right if we are patient with him and, whenever the occasion arises, show him his error or correct our own when we are found to be in error. . . . In the present disturbed atmosphere, when charges are hurled against one another, it would be folly to live in a fool's paradise and feel that we can do no wrong. That blissful state it is no longer possible for us to claim. It will be creditable if by strenuous effort we succeed in isolating the mischief and then eradicating it. . . . Nature has so made us that we do not see our backs; it is reserved for others to see them. Hence it is wise to profit by what they see."[20]

To the Muslims in effect he said that if their object was, as he took it that it was, not to discredit the Hindus of Kathiawad and the Indian Union but to elucidate the truth and to protect Muslim life, honour and property, all that could be secured by the strictest adherence to truth and by going to the many Hindu friends that the signatories knew they had. "The workers in Kathiawad who have no communal prejudice are striving to reach the truth and seek redress of every wrong done to the Muslims who are as dear to them as themselves. Will they (the Muslims) help in the process?"[21]

To "His Provisional Highness" of Junagadh, he wrote: "I am sending you herewith a wire about Junagadh that I have received. If the facts stated in it are true, you have been guilty of a very serious lapse. If, on the other hand, the charges are unfounded, what I have said falls to the ground. I have received numerous letters from Hindus to the effect that you talk nothing but the sword. The Kathiawad tangle is not so simple as you think. . . . If the leaders are not free from selfishness and pride, it will profit Kathiawad nothing. It was easy to win Swaraj, it is far more difficult to sustain it."[22]

At the same time he sent two of his own trusted workers to Kathiawad. These workers along with workers from Bombay and Kathiawad, after comparing notes with the local Muslims, wired to Gandhiji admitting what had happened, and contradicting the very gross exaggerations. It had an instantaneous effect on the local Muslim leaders. They wired to Gandhiji admitting that there had been much exaggeration in their earlier telegrams and what had appeared about Kathiawad in Pakistan papers was incorrect: "Our telegram (was the) result of reports which (are) still not verified. . . . We are satisfied that damage (was) not extensive as originally feared. . . . No question of unimaginable wrong or wrong without parallel. Please do not be worried."

Here was a fine example of Gandhiji's technique of publicity and propaganda in action. He pointed out the moral: False propaganda did no good. "The proper thing is to trust truth to conquer untruth."[23]

In *Harijan* he wrote: "When it is relevant, truth has to be uttered, however unpleasant it may be. . . . Misdeeds of the Hindus in the Union have to be proclaimed by Hindus from the housetop, if those of the Muslims in Pakistan are to be arrested or stopped."[24]

6

Right till the end of the British rule in India, Jinnah and the Muslim League had ridden in triumph on the "heads I win tails you lose" principle by virtue of the right of veto on political progress which the presence of the British power gave it. It had enabled them to force the majority to concede every demand that was made. The whole conception, rise and finale of the two-nation theory of the League was the result of the unnatural conditions created by the British presence. Junagadh marked the turning point.

There was no justification whatever for Pakistan's incursion into Junagadh. It had no strategic or economic interest in Junagadh, which was situated inside the Indian territory. But the bad old habit of using every opportunity to cause the maximum embarrassment to the Congress — now the Indian Union Government — persisted. The conditions had, however, since changed. The gamble failed. When it tried to carry the same game into Kashmir — its next target — it was hoist with its own petard.

Gandhiji had always had uneasy forebodings about Kashmir and had tried his best to prevent it from becoming a potential menace to peace between the two Dominions. It was contiguous to India as well as Pakistan. As early as the middle of June, Lord Mountbatten had tried to persuade the Maharaja of Kashmir to make up his mind to accede either to the one or to the other Dominion, after ascertaining

the will of the people, and to announce the decision before the 15th August. The State Department under Sardar Patel even went out of its way to reassure the Maharaja, through Lord Mountbatten, that in case Kashmir decided to accede to Pakistan, the Union Government would not regard it as "an unfriendly act".[25]

But the Maharaja failed to come to any decision by the appointed date. He needed more time to decide. It was not merely to which Dominion he should accede to; it was much more — whether "it is not in the best interest of both Dominions and of my State to stand independent."[26] The indecision cost him dear.

To gain more time the Maharaja, three days before the transfer of power, entered into a standstill agreement for one year with Pakistan. He had wished to enter into a similar agreement with the Indian Union also but while talks in that regard were still in progress, Pakistan proceeded to force the issue by adopting the policy of the "big stick".

Kashmir's main lines of communication ran through West Punjab (Pakistan). Its essential supplies of consumer goods had therefore to come through Pakistan which also provided an outlet for its exports like timber through its river system. Besides its post and telegraph and railway system were integrated with and administered by West Punjab which became part of Pakistan after Partition.

Soon after entering into the standstill agreement with Kashmir, Pakistan began to put pressure on the Kashmir Government to decide the issue of accession in its favour, by, among other things, withholding supplies of essential consumer goods such as foodgrains, salt, sugar and petrol. On the 24th August, *Dawn* menacingly wrote: "The time has come to tell the Maharaja of Kashmir that he must make his choice and choose Pakistan." Should Kashmir fail to join "the gravest possible trouble will inevitably ensue."

In September, news reached India that tribesmen from the Frontier Province were being collected and sent to the Kashmir border. In the beginning of October, armed bands moved into Jammu Province of the Kashmir State from the neighbouring districts of West Punjab. On the Jammu side of the border, local inhabitants, who were chiefly Hindus, took reprisals. In these border conflicts a very large number of villages were destroyed.

The raiders burnt villages and towns as they advanced, put to death the inhabitants besides indulging in all sort of excesses. The Kashmir State army, which had to meet raiders at numerous points, soon found itself broken up into small fragments and soon ceased to be a fighting force. Equipped with modern arms and led by highly competent officers the raiders in a very short time overran a considerable part of the Jammu Province.

The Kashmir Government feeling that its only chance of survival under the growing pressure of Pakistan was to win the support of

its people, on the 29th September, ordered the release of Sheikh Abdullah and other workers of the Kashmir National Conference.

After his release Abdullah declared in one of his speeches: "I never believed in the Pakistan slogan . . . but in spite of it Pakistan is a reality. . . . I am the President of the Indian State People's Conference whose policy is clear. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is my best friend and I hold Gandhiji in real reverence. It is also a fact that Congress has greatly helped our movement (for democratic Government in the State). But in spite of all this, my personal conviction will not stand in the way of taking an independent decision in favour of one or the other Dominion. Our choice of joining India or Pakistan would be based on the welfare of the forty lakhs of people living in Jammu and Kashmir. And even if we join Pakistan, we shall not believe in the two-nation theory which has spread so much poison."[27]

The Pakistan Government finding the coveted prize slipping through its fingers redoubled its pressure. This led the Prime Minister of Kashmir, M. C. Mahajan, to wire on the 15th October, to the Governor-General of Pakistan as follows:

> Ever since August 15, even in spite of agreement to observe standstill agreement on matters on which agreement existed on August 14 . . . difficulties have been felt not only with regard to supplies from West Punjab of petrol, oils, food, salt, sugar and cloth but also with the working of the postal system. Savings bank accounts were refused to be operated. Postal certificates were not cashed, cheques on West Punjab banks were not honoured. Owing to the failure of remittances from the Lahore Currency Office even the Imperial Bank was hard put to meet obligations. Motor vehicles registered in the State held up at Rawalpindi. Railway traffic from Sialkot to Jammu discontinued. . . .
>
> The Radio of Pakistan appears to have been licensed to pour volumes of malicious, libellous and false propaganda. Smaller Feudatory States are prompted to threaten and even intervene with armed interference into the Kashmir State. . . .
>
> The Kashmir Government cannot but conclude that all (this) is being done with the knowledge and connivance of the local authorities. The Kashmir Government considers these acts extremely unfriendly if not actually inimical. Finally, Government wish to make it plain that it is not possible to tolerate this attitude any longer. . . .
>
> The Governor-General and the Premier are asked personally to look into the matter and put a stop to all the iniquities which are being perpetrated. Unfortunately, if this request is not heeded, the Government fully hope that the Governor-General and

Premier of Pakistan would agree that it would be justified in asking for friendly assistance and oppose trespass on its fundamental rights.

The only result of this appeal was to rouse the ire of Pakistan. "Asking for friendly assistance" was construed as "a threat", and the appeal to the Governor-General and the Prime Minister of Pakistan for redress was characterised as "baseless allegation and calumny against Pakistan"! As for infiltration by the people of Pakistan into Kashmir, well, "People travel to and from between Kashmir and Pakistan in the normal course of business." The Pakistan Government's telegram proceeded:

> We are astonished to hear your threat "to ask for assistance" presumably meaning thereby assistance from an outside power. The only object of this intervention by an outside power secured by you would be to complete the process of suppressing the Musalmans to enable you to join the Indian Dominion as *coup d'etat* against the declared and well-known will of 85 per cent. of the population of your State. . . . If this policy is not changed and the preparations and active measures that you are now taking in implementing this policy are not stopped, the gravest consequences will follow for which you alone will be responsible.[28]

This was followed on the 23rd October by intrusion into Muzaffarabad from Abbottabad-Mansera side of large armed bands of tribesmen from the Frontier Province and soldiers of the Pakistan army, who were said to be "on leave", fully armed with modern weapons, including Bren guns, machine guns, mortars and flame throwers. Loaded in about 100 trucks, driven by petrol issued from the Frontier Province and West Punjab rationed quota, they moved rapidly down the valley towards Srinagar. All along the way they resorted to arson, murder and loot, rape and abduction of women.

On the 24th October, the news was received in Delhi that tribesmen were being taken in military transport up the Rawalpindi road. On the 25th October, Muzaffarabad and Domel were attacked and captured by some five thousand tribesmen, and the invaders were a little more than thirty-five miles from Srinagar itself, the capital of Kashmir. The State forces were in a panic and altogether inadequate to cope with the emergency and a most critical situation developed.

The Maharaja approached the Union Government with the request to send arms and troops immediately to save the situation. But the Union Government under Lord Mountbatten's advice decided that they could not send their troops into Kashmir unless it became an inescapable obligation by Kashmir's accession to India. V. P. Menon,

the Secretary to the Ministry of States, flew on the 25th October to convey to the Maharaja the decision of the Union Government. He returned on the 26th October with a duly signed letter from the Maharaja declaring Kashmir's accession to India.

The letter of accession read: "With the conditions obtaining at present in my State and the great emergency of the situation as it exists, I have no option but to ask for help from the Indian Dominion. Naturally they cannot send the help asked for by me without my State acceding to the Dominion of India. I have accordingly decided to do so and I attach the Instrument of Accession for acceptance by your Government."

In the course of the same letter the Maharaja informed the Union Government that "it is my intention at once to set up an Interim Government and ask Sheikh Abdullah to carry the responsibility in this emergency with my Prime Minister."

The National Conference and Sheikh Abdullah joined in the request to the Indian Government to accept the accession and send in troops to repel the invaders.

An immediate decision was necessary if the fair valley was not to fall a casualty to the raiders. Every hour counted. The Union Government, therefore, decided to accept the accession of Kashmir, making it clear that this acceptance was subject to the endorsement of the Maharaja's decision by the people of the State and that it was their wish that "as soon as law and order have been restored in Kashmir, and her soil cleared of the invader, the question of the State's accession should be settled by a reference to the people."

In the early morning on the 27th October, three hundred and thirty men of the First Sikh Battalion were flown in as the first batch to block a major invasion by the tribesmen, who were moving rapidly on the Baramula-Srinagar road. Besides the Royal Indian Air Force, almost all the available civil aircraft were put in commission to transport men and munitions to Kashmir. The whole thing was arranged in a matter of hours and Mountbatten was reported to have remarked that "as a military operation the speed of the fly-in on 27th October left . . . South-East Asia Command's efforts standing."[29] It certainly left Jinnah standing.

Another twenty-four hours and it would have been too late. The arrival of the Indian troops stemmed the tide of the invasion. The raiders had already captured Baramula, which commands the entrance to the Valley of Kashmir, burnt down the Mohor power station which provided electric current to the Kashmir capital and were threatening the air-strip near Srinagar—the only landing ground in Kashmir by which air-borne help from India could arrive.

The raiders spared none—neither Hindus nor Muslims nor any other. They sacked St. Joseph's Convent at Baramula, smashed

hospital equipment, wounded the Mother Superior of the Order of St. Francis, violated a number of nuns and shot some. The reign of terror continued for nine days at Baramula. Loot and women were the chief prizes sought by the raiders. But for their preoccupation with these, they might have overrun the whole of Kashmir before the Indian troops arrived.

The breathing space enabled the National Conference workers to organise the local people's militia for defence against the raiders. There was no administration left in Srinagar. The Maharaja had already under advice shifted to his summer palace in Jammu. There were no troops, no police; light had failed and there were a large number of refugees. And yet Srinagar functioned without panic. The leaders of the National Conference and their volunteers took charge of the situation. In the face of the common peril people showed a sense of cohesion and unity of purpose which made the recent inter-communal fratricide seem like the memory of an ugly nightmare and fully vindicated the Indian Union's faith in the ideal of the secular State.

Soon the raiders were on the run. Uri was recaptured, the Poonch garrison was relieved and by the time there was cease fire in Kashmir the threat of the raiders' re-entry into the Valley of Kashmir was completely removed.

Jinnah, it was learnt, had kept himself in readiness at Abbottabad to make a triumphal entry into the Kashmir capital on the Id day on receiving the news of the fall of Srinagar which was hourly expected. Exasperated by the Union Government's fly-in, he had ordered the Pakistan troops to be moved into Kashmir. He was, however, advised by Sir Claude Auchinleck, the Supreme Commander, to whom General Gracey, the acting Pakistan Commander-in-Chief, referred the matter, that the Indian Union was perfectly within its right in sending the troops into Kashmir in answer to the Maharaja's request and the despatch of Pakistan troops into Kashmir might touch off a war between the two Dominions. This would have resulted in every British army officer being withdrawn from both sides. Jinnah was not prepared for this. He withdrew the orders.

The Pakistan Government denounced Kashmir's accession to India as based on "fraud and violence". In a meeting at Lahore on 2nd November, however, Mountbatten pointed out to Jinnah that while Kashmir's accession had certainly been brought about by "force and violence", the violence came from the tribes for which Pakistan, not India, was responsible. "The argument then got into a vicious circle. . . . Jinnah would retort that in his opinion it was India who had committed the violence by sending in the troops and Mountbatten would continue to stand his ground that where the tribesmen were was where the violence lay. Thus it went on until Jinnah could no longer conceal his anger at what he called Mountbatten's obtuseness."[30]

Categorically denying any complicity in the tribal incursion into Kashmir the Pakistan Government pleaded its inability to prevent their passage through Pakistan territory. The only way in which they could help pull the raiders out of Kashmir, the Pakistan Prime Minister said, was by being allowed to march Pakistan troops into Kashmir. Being apprised, however, by Mountbatten of the strength of the Indian forces in Kashmir and its likely build up during the next few days, Jinnah offered to "call the whole thing off"[31] provided the Union Government agreed on immediate and simultaneous withdrawal of forces on both sides from Kashmir. This showed that the Pakistan Prime Minister's plea of helplessness to pull out the raiders from Kashmir unless Pakistan troops could be allowed to enter Kashmir was not taken very seriously even by his own Governor-General.

There were at the time of Kashmir's accession between three thousand and ten thousand non-Kashmiri raiders in the State. By the end of the year their number had increased to 50,000 in the State. Another 100,000 were massing on the Pakistan side of the border. India at the time could put into the field for the defence of Kashmir less than 16,000 men as a striking force.

The Indian Prime Minister speaking in the Indian Parliament on the 25th November, charged Pakistan with complicity in a carefully planned and well-organised raid into Kashmir with the deliberate object of seizing the State by force. "We have evidence in our possession," observed Pandit Nehru, "to demonstrate that the whole business of the Kashmir raids was deliberately organised by high officials of the Pakistan Government."

Gandhiji had been following the developments in Kashmir with painful interest. He had always maintained, he affirmed in one of his prayer addresses, that the real rulers of all the States were their people. The People of Kashmir, without any coercion or show of force from within or without, must by themselves decide the issue. The Pakistan Government had been coercing Kashmir to join Pakistan. When in his distress, the Maharaja, backed by Sheikh Abdullah, therefore, wished to accede to the Union, the Indian Governor-General could not reject the advance. If the Maharaja alone had wanted to accede, said Gandhiji, he could not have defended such accession. As it was, both the Maharaja and Sheikh Abdullah, speaking for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, had asked for it. Sheikh Abdullah came on the scene because he claimed to represent the people of Kashmir—the people as a whole, not merely the Muslims.

The plain fact of the matter was that having previously taken the stand in the case of Junagadh that the ruler had "full legal right" to decide the issue of accession, the Pakistan Government's objection to the ruler of Kashmir exercising the same prerogative in respect of his State could be held only as frivolous. The association of the



Kanu Gandhi

Miracle or Accident? "For myself I only ask whether the dream of my youth is to be realised in the evening of my life." (page 381) [ONE

Government House.
~~The Viceroy's House~~
New Delhi.

26th August, 1947.

My dear Gandhiji,

In the Punjab we have 55 thousand soldiers and large scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting.

As a serving officer, as well as an administrator, may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the One Man Boundary Force, not forgetting his Second in Command, Mr Suhrawardy.

You should have heard the enthusiastic applause which greeted the mention of your name in the Constituent Assembly on the 15th of August when all of us were thinking so much of you.

Edwina has gone off today on a courageous mission to the Punjab with Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, to see what they can do to help relieve the suffering and distress among the refugees.

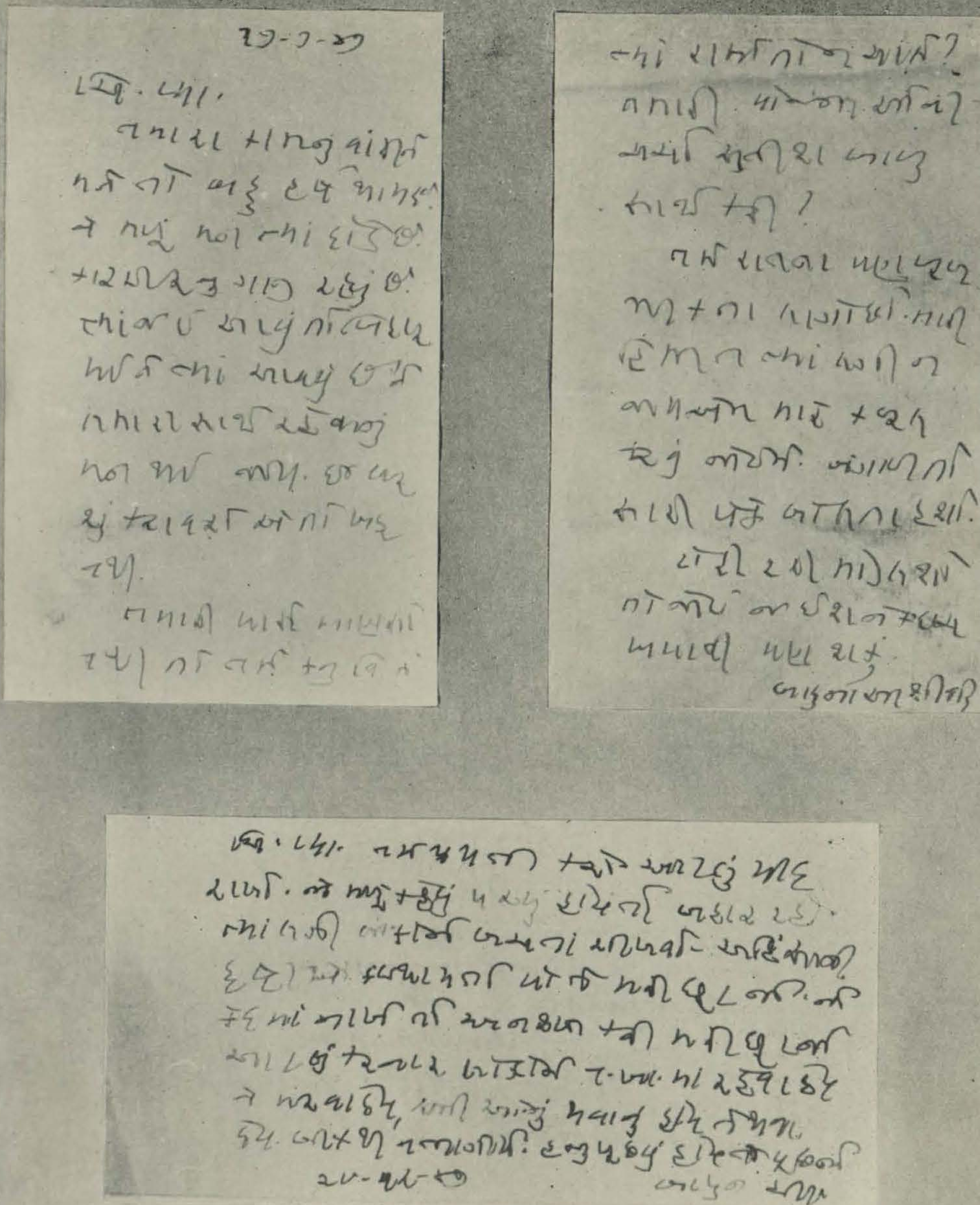
Yours very sincerely

Mountbatten of Burma

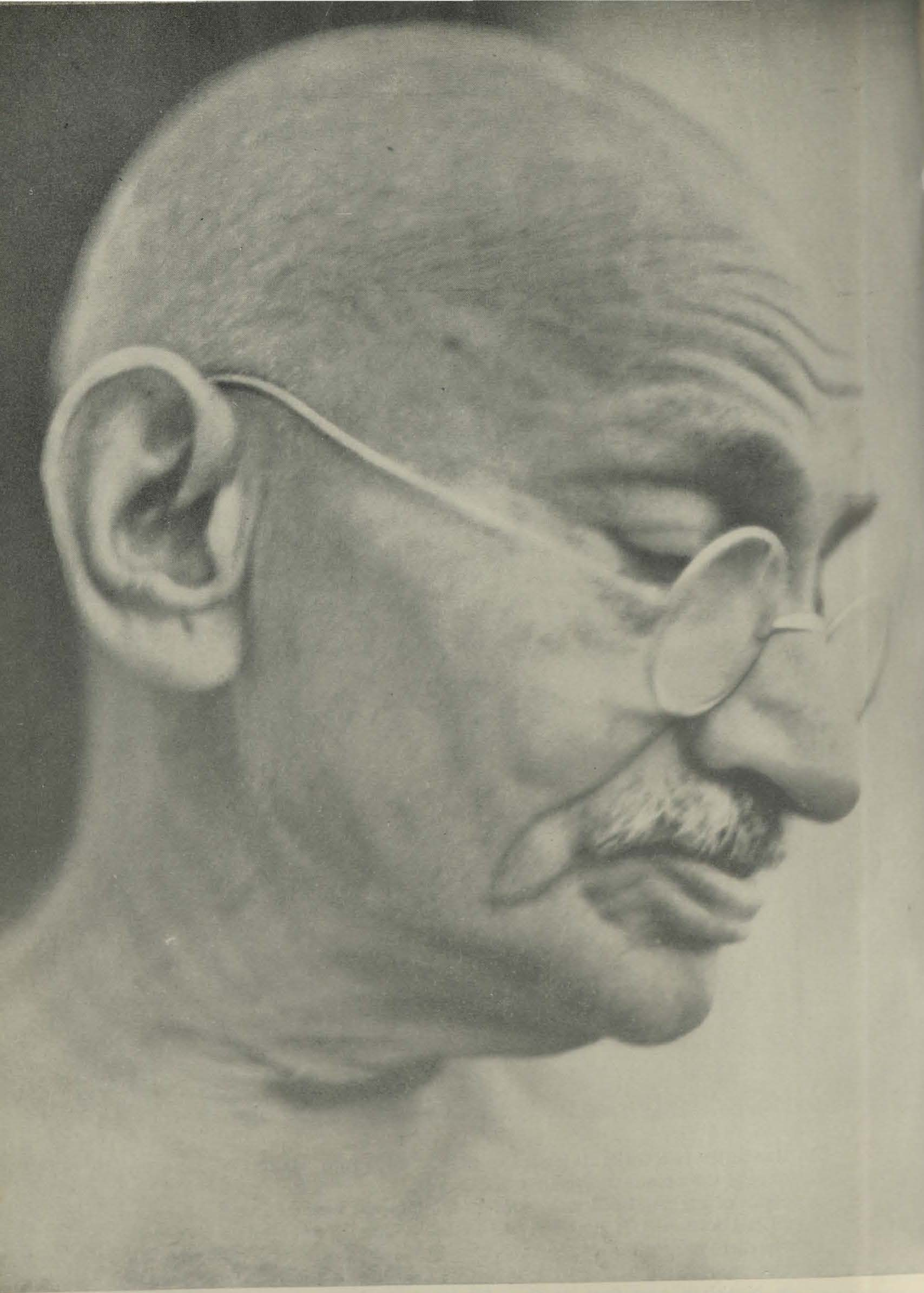
Mr Gandhi.

Lord Mountbatten's tribute to the "One-Man Boundary Force".
(page 382)

TWO]



Gandhiji's two Gujarati letters to the author. (Top) "It fills me with joy to read the accounts of your work.... You seem to be doing a lot of going about of nights also. I must confess I would not venture that far." (page 395). (Bottom) "If death comes in the course of your mission of non-violence you will embrace it.... If they throw you into prison you will fast unto death. Those who have this capacity may continue to remain in Noakhali and face death.... There must be no cowardly retreat." (page 769)

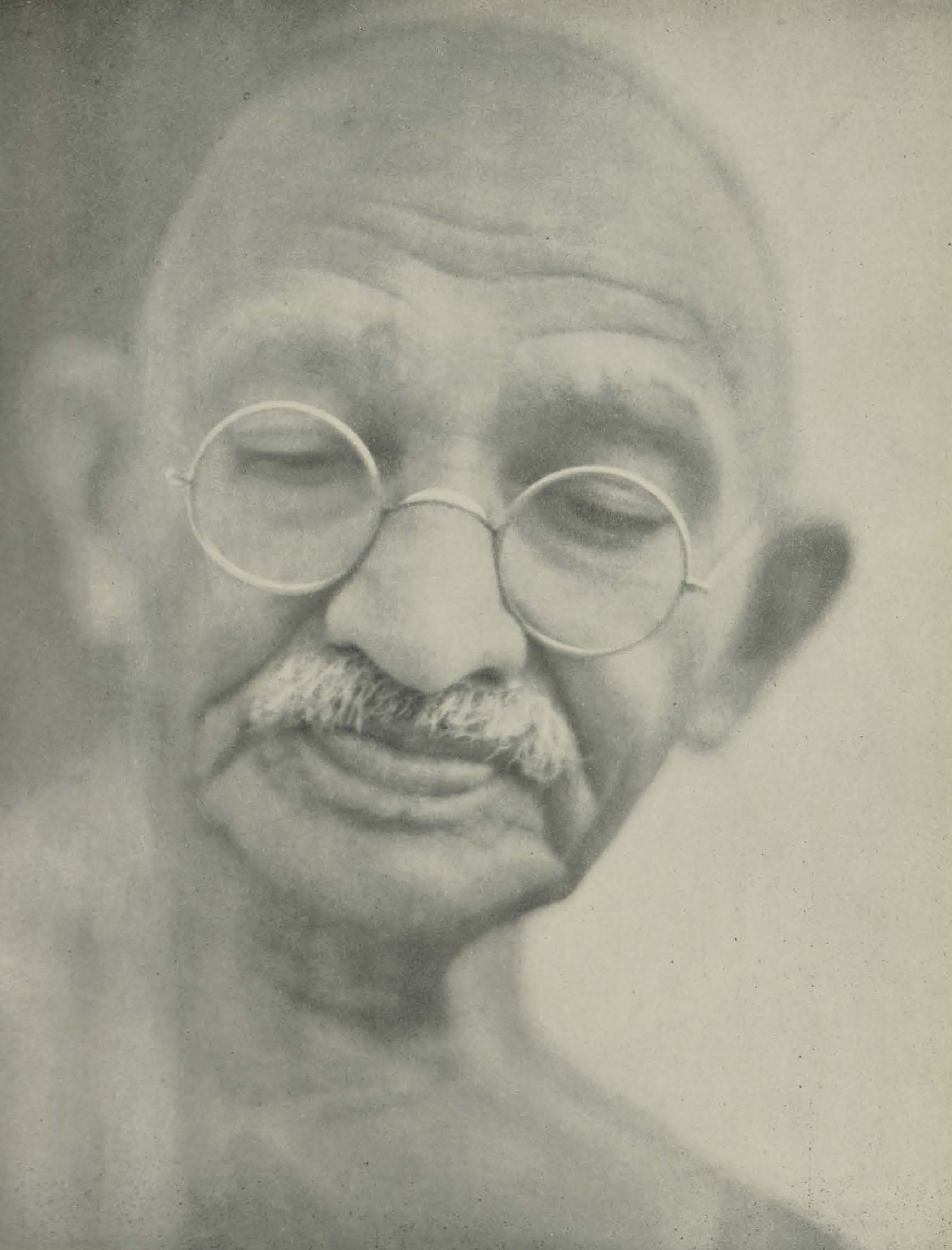


D. R. D. Wadia

FOUR]

"There is a stage in life when a man does not need even to proclaim his thoughts....Mere thoughts act.....My striving is in that direction."

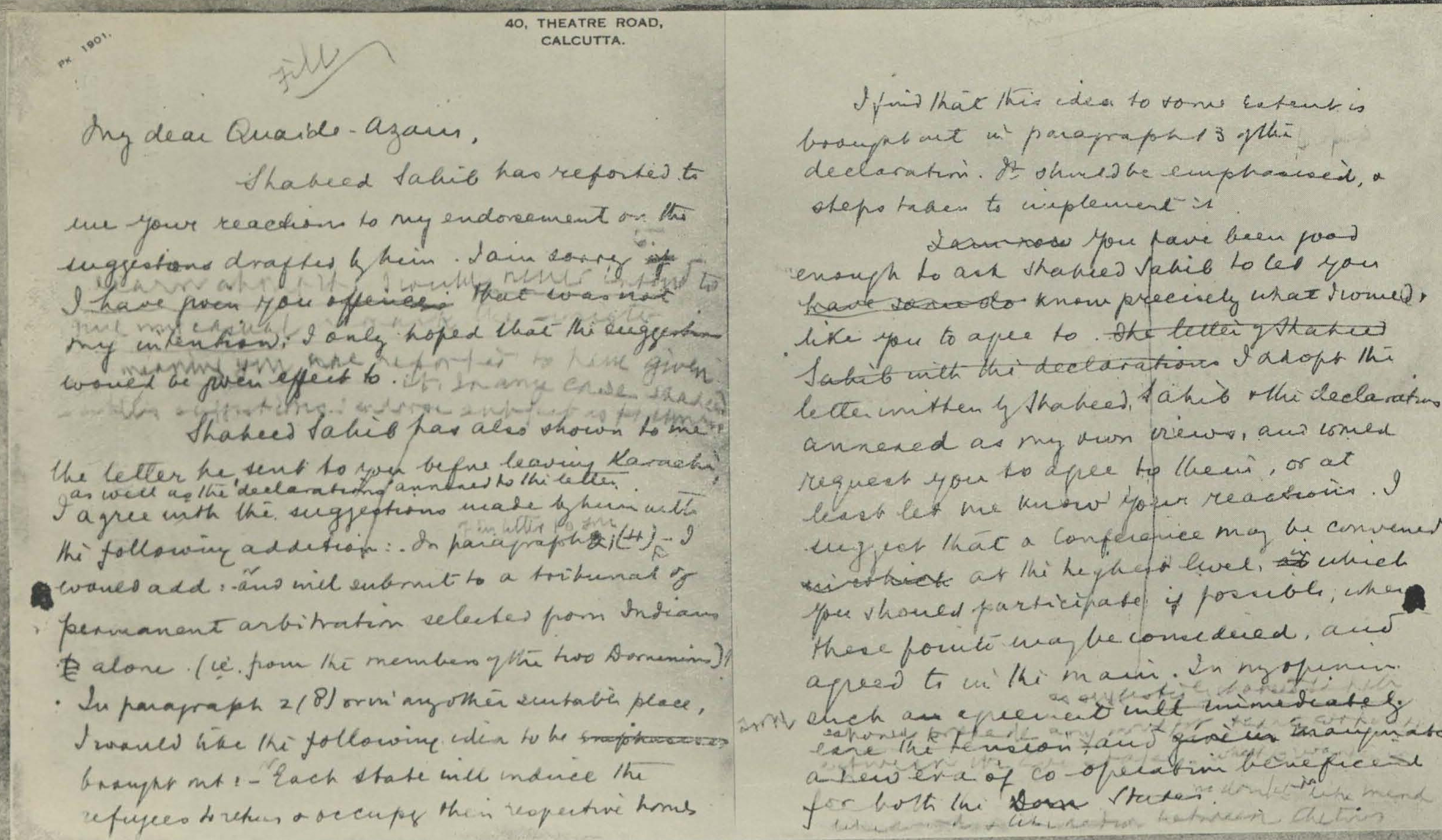
(page 463)



D. R. D. Wadia

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." (page 464)

[FIVE


40, THEATRE ROAD,
CALCUTTA.

My dear Quaid-e-Azam,

Shaheed Sahib has reported to me your reactions to my endorsement on the suggestions drafted by him. I am sorry if I have given you offence. That was not my intention. I only hoped that the suggestions would be given effect to.

Shaheed Sahib has also shown to me the letter he sent to you before leaving Karachi, as well as the declaration annexed to the letter. I agree with the suggestions made by him with the following addition:- In paragraph 2(4) I would add:- "and will submit to a tribunal of permanent arbitration selected from Indians alone (i.e. from the members of the two Dominions)". In paragraph 2(8) or in any other suitable place, I would like the following idea to be brought out:- Each State will induce the refugees to return and occupy their respective homes

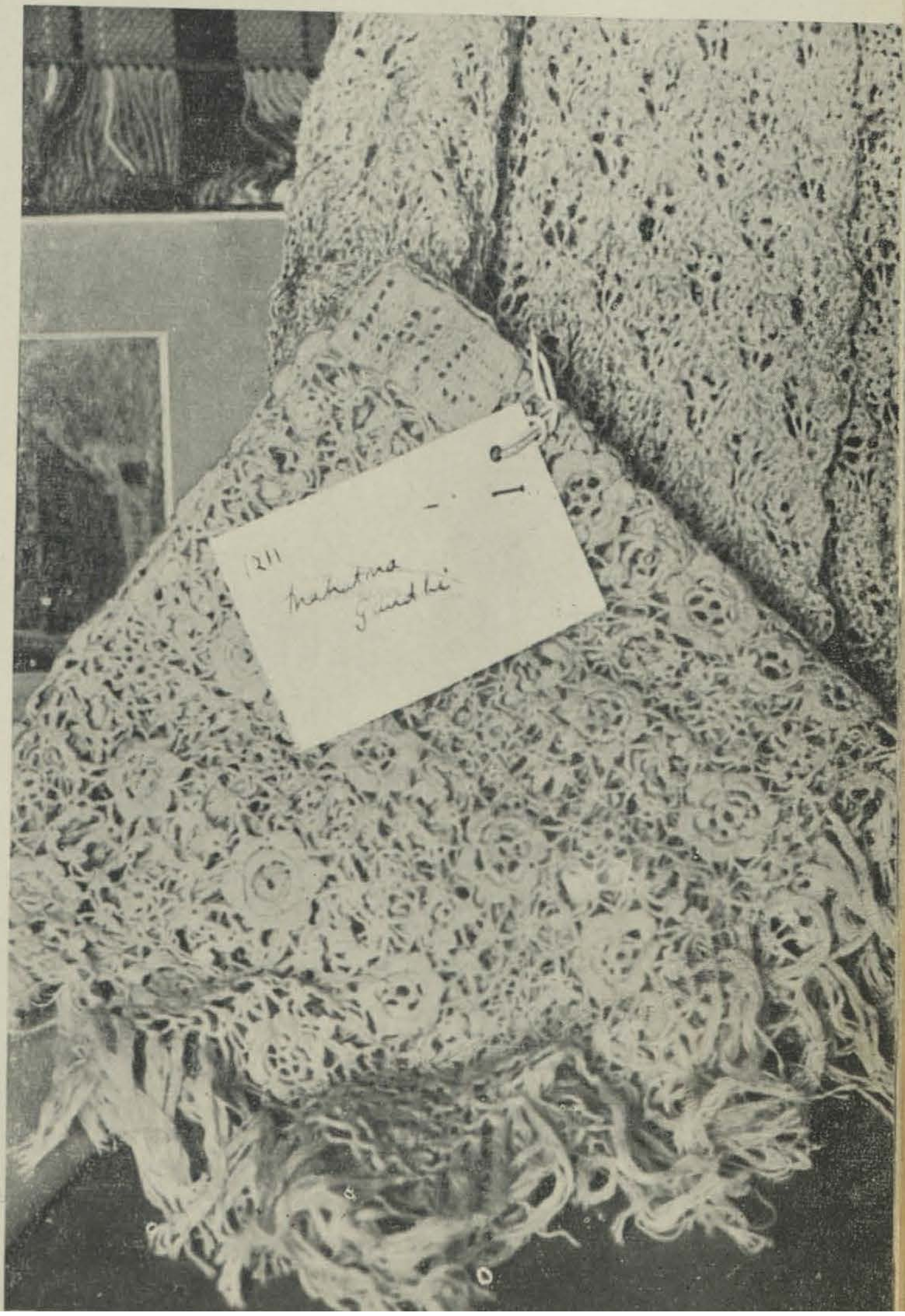
I find that this idea to some extent is brought out in paragraph 3 of the declaration. It should be emphasised, and steps taken to implement it.

You have been good enough to ask Shaheed Sahib to let you know precisely what I would like you to agree to. I adopt the letter written by Shaheed Sahib and the declarations annexed as my own views, and would request you to agree to them, or at least let me know your reactions. I suggest that a Conference may be convened at the highest level, in which you should participate if possible, where these points may be considered, and agreed to in the main. In my opinion such an agreement will immediately ease the tension, and a new era of co-operation beneficial for both the States.

SIX] Shaheed Suhrawardy's draft on his own letter-head of a letter by Gandhiji to Jinnah with Gandhiji's corrections in pencil. "What is wanted no doubt is like mind, like word and like action between the two (States)." (page 480)

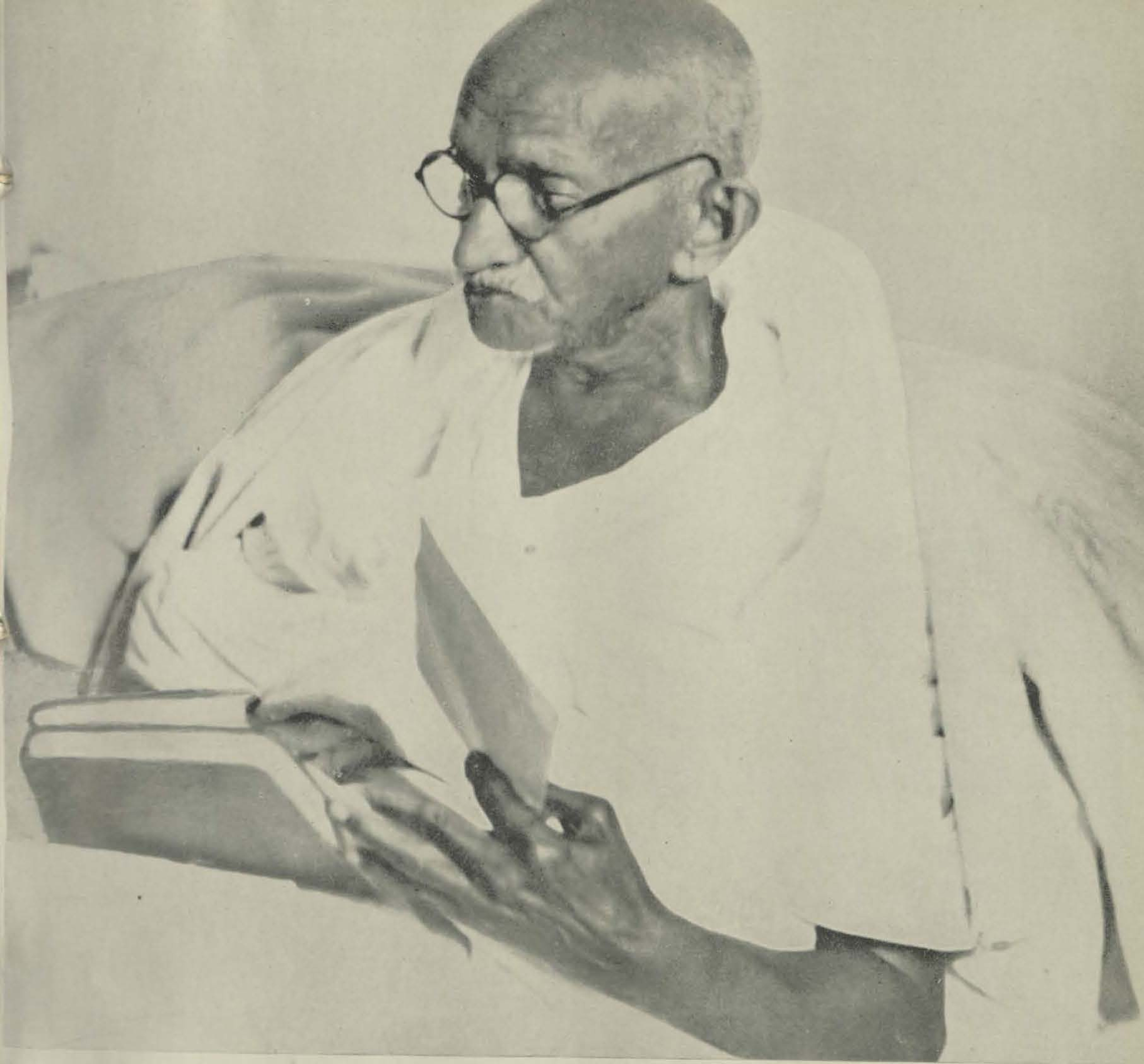


Hindustan Times

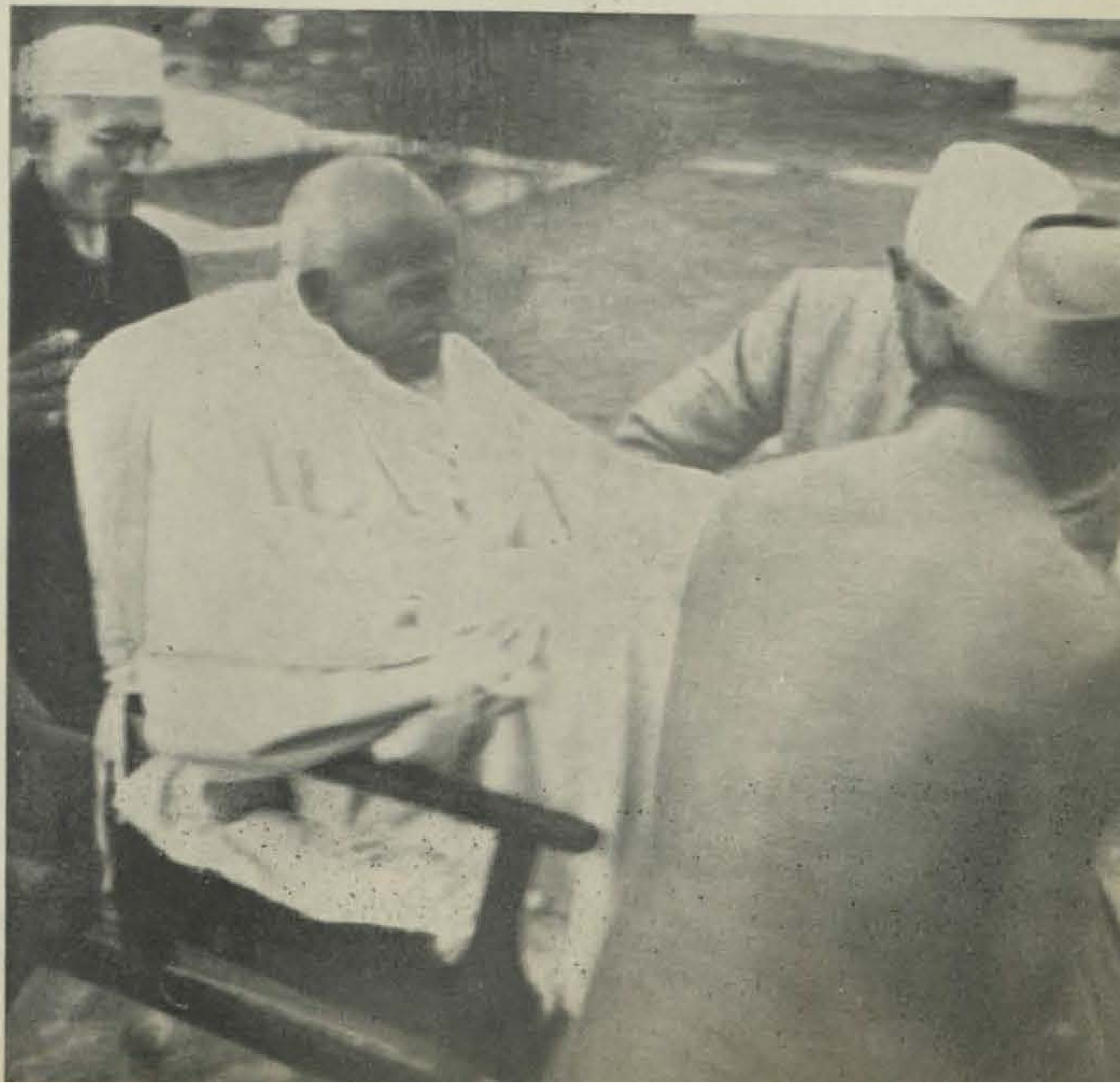


(Above) The Burmese Prime Minister Thakin Nu with Gandhiji wearing the Noakhali peasant's hat. (Right) Gandhiji's wedding present to Princess Elizabeth. "This little thing is made out of doubled yarn of my own spinning." (page 514)



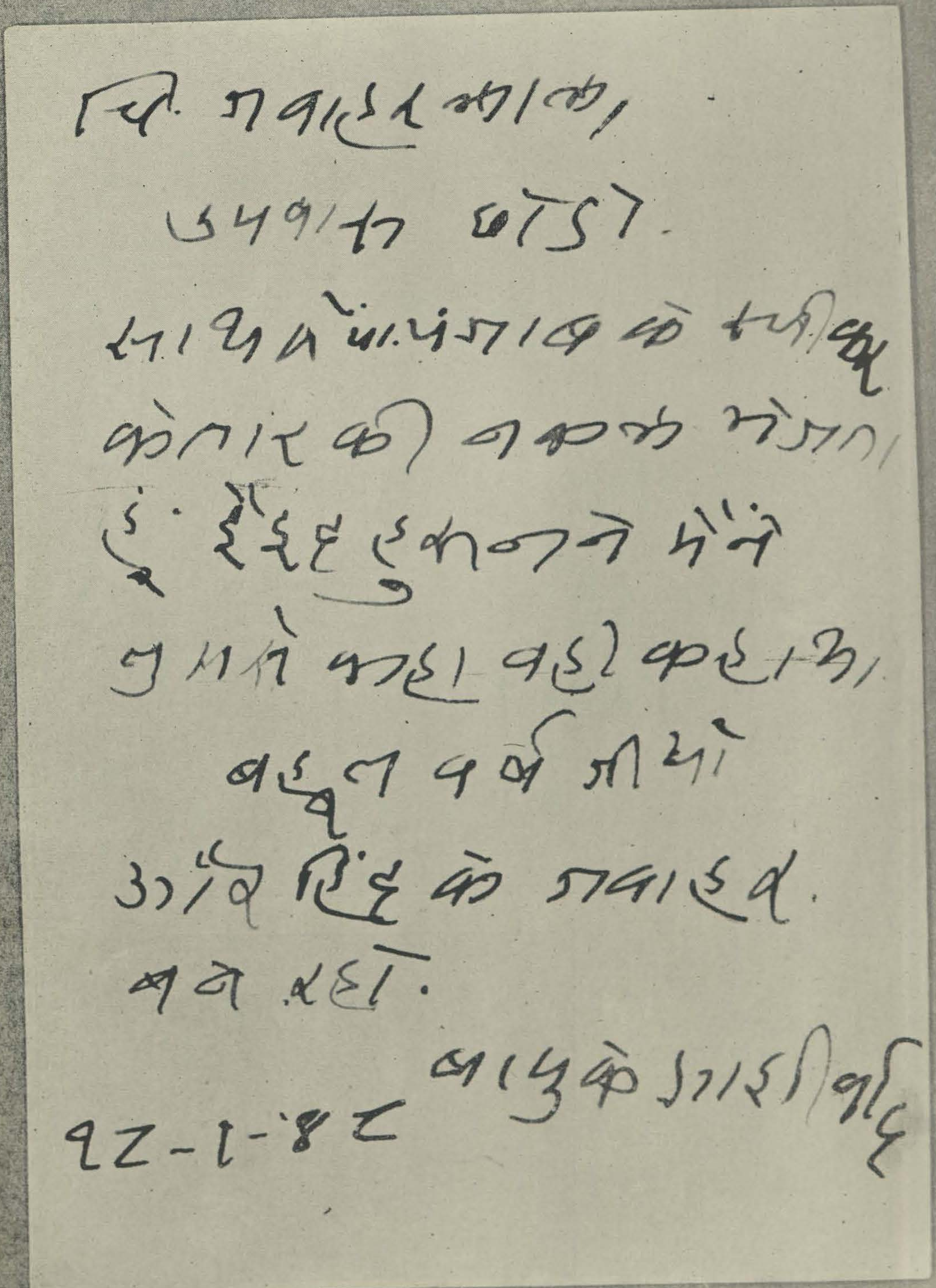


Hindustan Times



(Above) What fast did to Gandhiji. (Right) Gandhiji being carried in a chair to the prayer ground.

(Left page) The fast begins. "No man, if he is pure, has anything more precious to give than his life." (page 702). (Photo: *Henri Cartier-Bresson*)



चि. जवाहरलाल,

उपवास छोडो.

साथमें प. पंजाब के स्पीकर

के तार की नकल भेजता

हुं. [illegible] हुसेनने [illegible]

मुझसे कहा वही कहा था.

बहुत वर्ष जीओ

और हिंद के जवाहर

बने रहो.

बापुके आशीर्वाद

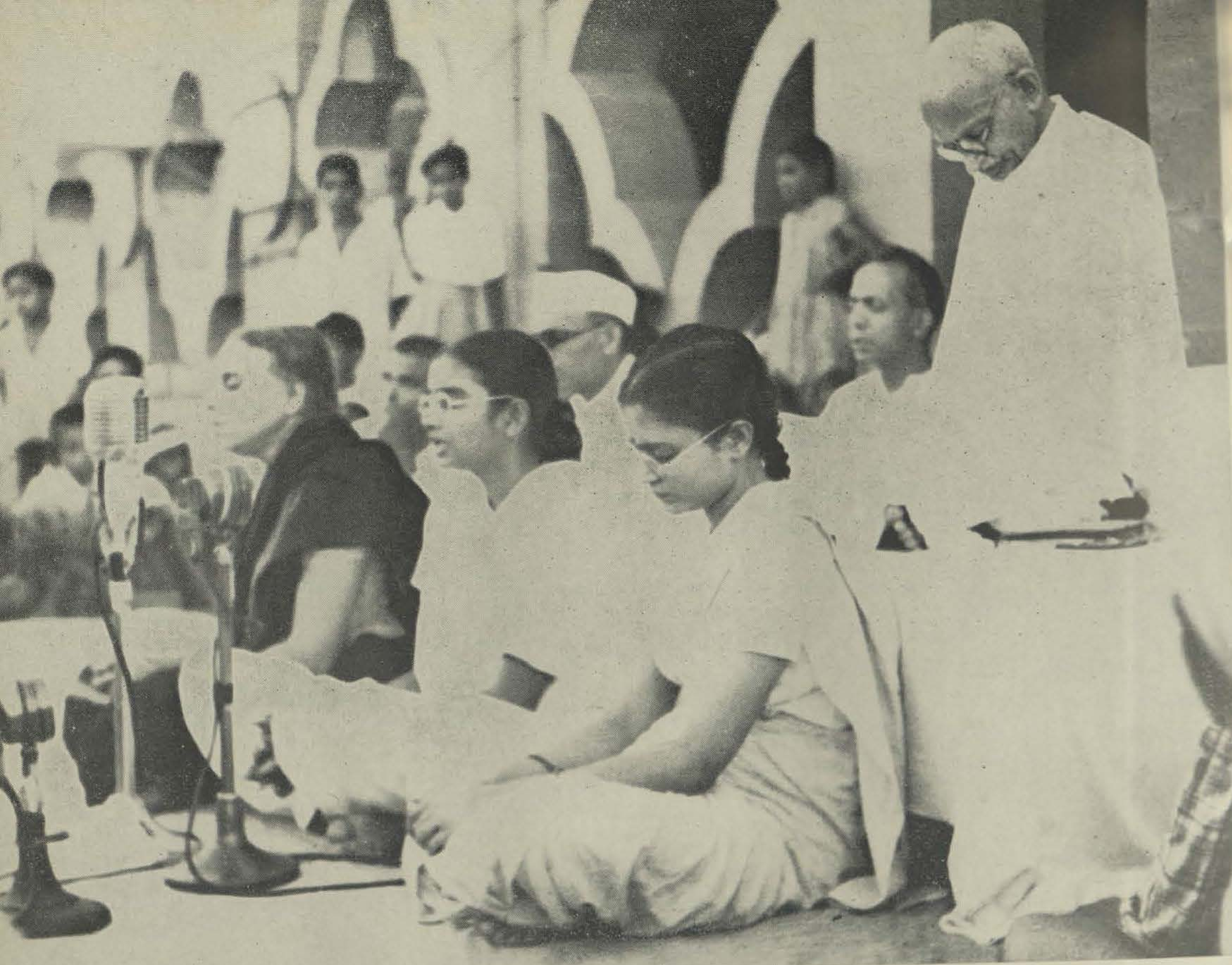
१८-१-४८

Gandhiji's note in Hindi to Pandit Nehru, who too had been fasting in sympathy. "Now break your fast.... May you live for many long years and continue to be the *Jawahar* (the jewel) of India." (page 731)

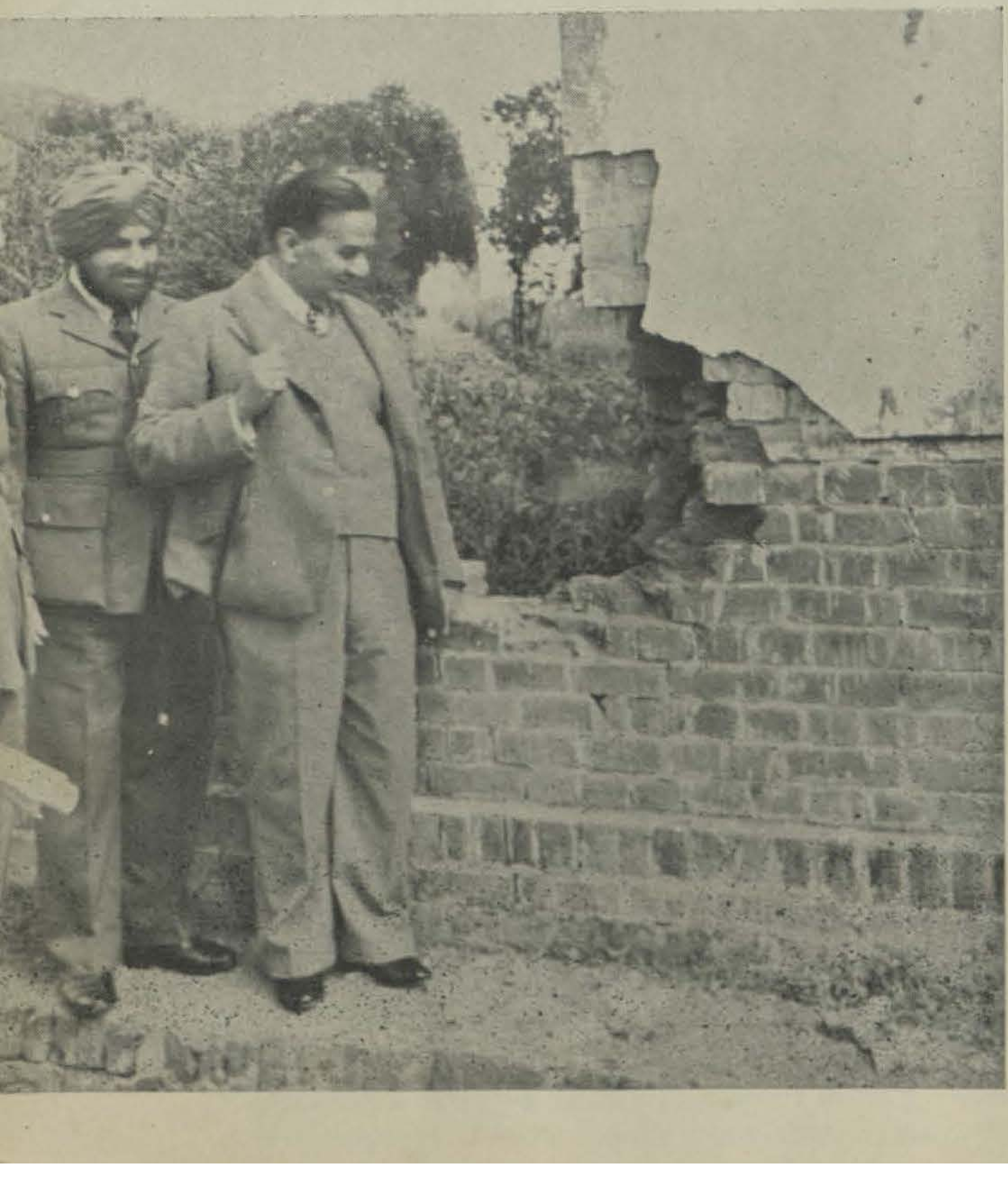


Margarate Bourke-White. Courtesy: Life magazine

Gandhiji breaking the fast by accepting at the hands of Maulana Azad a glass of orange juice (page 731) [ELEVEN



Hindustan Times



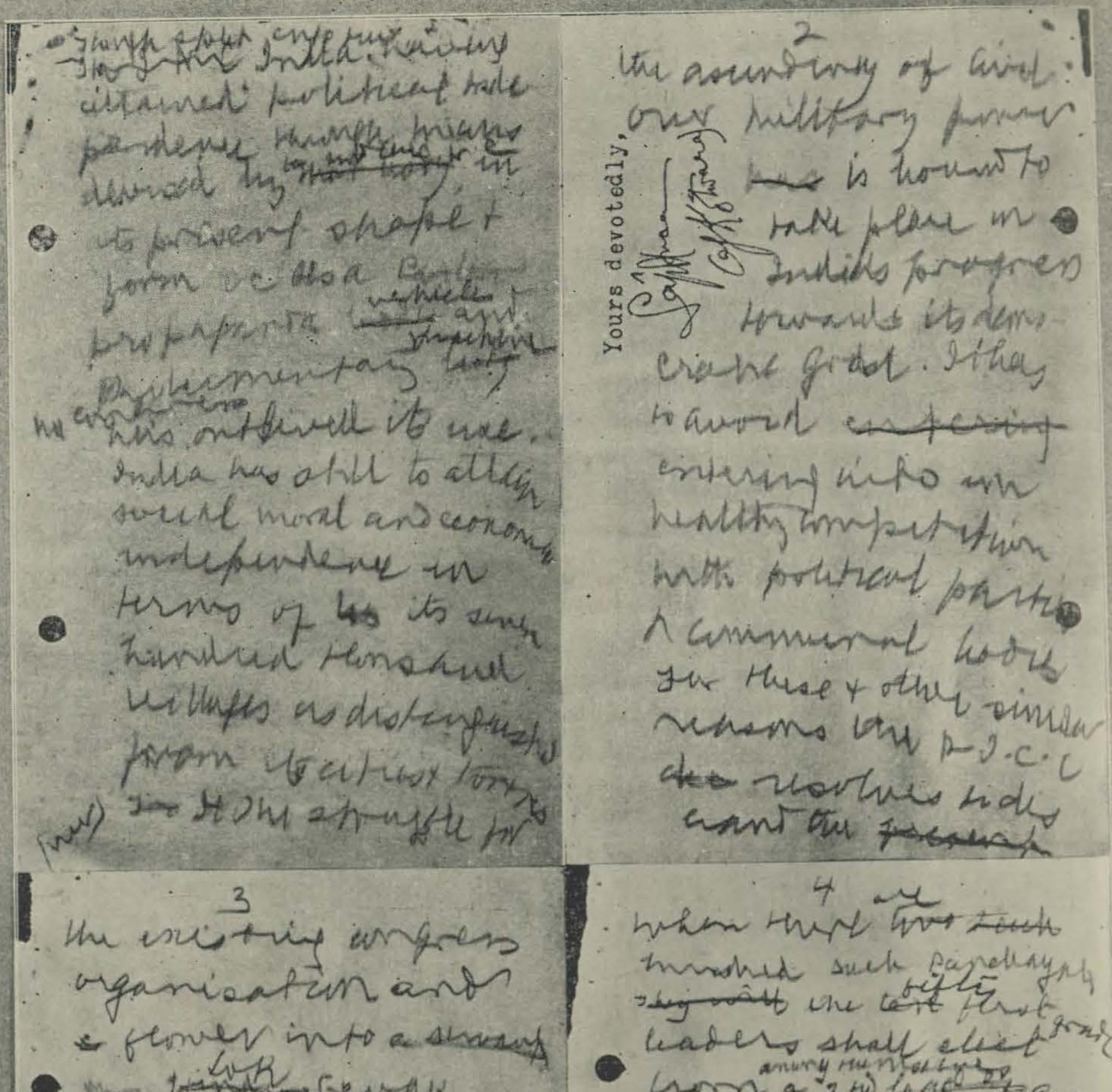
(Above) The prayer at Birla House in progress. (Left) The bomb explosion. Shaheed Suhrawardy is seen visiting the site. "Listen! Listen! Listen everybody...nothing has happened." (page 749)



Hindustan Times

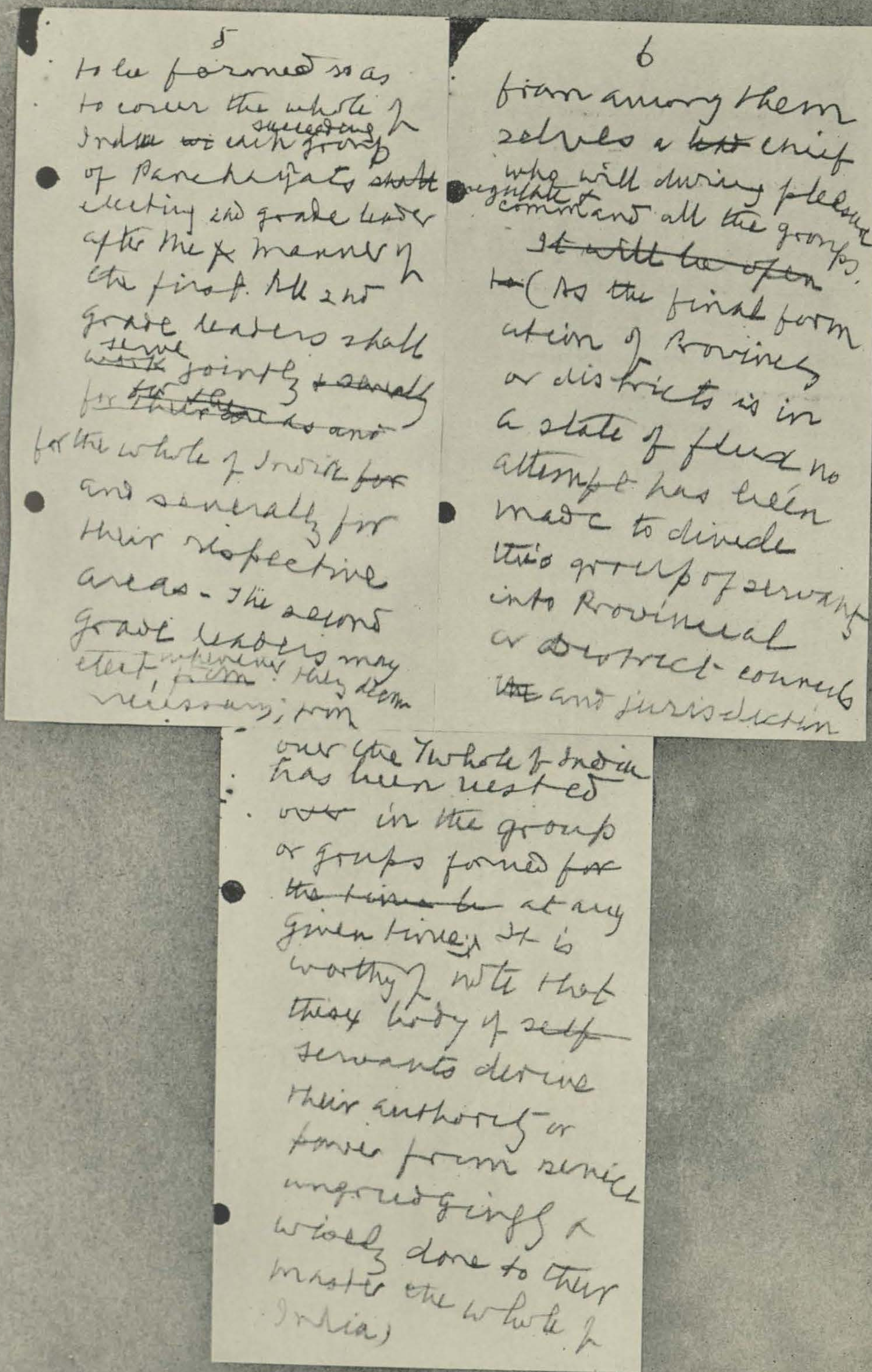
Gandhiji attends the annual Urs at Mehrauli. "I want you to take a vow that you will never again listen to the voice of Satan and abandon the way of brotherliness and peace." (page 762)

[THIRTEEN



The draft of the Last Will and Testament which was quietly put on the shelf. "The A.I.C.C. resolves

FOURTEEN]



5

to be formed so as to cover the whole of India ~~or~~ each succeeding group of Panchayats ~~shall~~ electing 2nd grade leader after the ~~[illegible]~~ manner of the first. All 2nd grade leaders shall ~~work~~ serve jointly ~~& severally~~ ~~for their areas~~ and for the whole of India ~~for~~ and severally for their respective areas. The second grade leaders may elect, whenever they deem necessary, from

6

from among themselves a ~~[illegible]~~ chief who will during pleasure regulate & command all the groups. ~~It will be open~~ ~~to~~ (As the final formation of provinces or districts is in a state of flux no attempt has been made to divide this group of servants into provincial or district councils ~~the~~ and jurisdiction over the whole of India has been vested ~~over~~ in the group or groups formed ~~for the time being~~ at any given time. It is worthy of note that this body of ~~self~~ servants derive their authority or power from service ungrudgingly & wisely done to their master the whole of India)

to disband the existing Congress organisation and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh." (page 679)



Hindustan Times

SIXTEEN] "I have to find peace in the midst of turmoil, light in the midst of darkness, hope in despair." (page 766)

Kashmir National Conference — the inter-communal popular political organisation that had been carrying on a struggle for democratic rights in Kashmir—with the Maharaja's request rendered the Indian Government's acceptance of Kashmir's accession perfectly valid and fully justified her in sending troops to repel the Pakistan-backed tribal invasion of Kashmir.

* * *

The defence of Kashmir exacted its toll of heroic sacrifice. Brigadier Usman, a Muslim officer of the Indian army, fell fighting valiantly while commanding his troops. Mir Maqbool Sherwani, a young Muslim leader of the National Conference in Baramula engaged in organising the people against the raiders, was captured by the invaders when they took Baramula. They asked him to repudiate the Kashmir National Conference and swear allegiance to the so-called Azad Kashmir Government. He not only refused but courageously told his captors to their face that their triumph would be short-lived as the Indian troops would be soon back in Baramula. He was dubbed a traitor, nails were driven through the palms of his hands as in the traditional picture of the crucified Christ, and his body was riddled with fourteen bullets followed by defacement and mutilation. But within 48 hours of the cold-blooded murder, his dying prophecy was fulfilled and the raiders were driven out of Baramula with the Indian Union troops in hot pursuit. Paying a tribute to his steadfastness and undaunted courage in one of his prayer addresses Gandhiji remarked: "This was a martyrdom of which anyone—Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or any other—would be proud."[32]

7

No agreement could be reached on the Kashmir issue between the two Governors-General and the two Prime Ministers. The Pakistan Government insisted upon the withdrawal of the Indian forces before a plebiscite was taken while the India Government demanded the prior withdrawal of all the tribesmen.

As an eleventh hour effort, Lord Mountbatten, with Pandit Nehru's concurrence, cabled to Mr. Attlee that he should fly out immediately to India and try to resolve the crisis by "personal mediation". But Mr. Attlee declined and suggested that the United Nations was the "proper channel".[33]

Accordingly, the Government of India, under Lord Mountbatten's advice, decided to refer the dispute to the United Nations Organisation. Pandit Nehru described it "as an act of faith". As a necessary preliminary, he handed their official letter of complaint to Liaquat Ali Khan on the 22nd December.

Gandhiji was not enamoured of taking any Indo-Pakistan dispute to an outside organisation. It would only get them "monkey justice", he warned. Were the Union and Pakistan always to depend on a third party to settle their disputes? he asked in the course of his post-prayer address on the 25th December. Could not Pakistan and the Union representatives sit down and thrash out the Kashmir affairs as they had already done in the case of many other things? In the alternative, could they not choose from among themselves good, true persons who would direct their steps? The first necessary condition for it was "an open and sincere confession" of past lapses. Hearty repentance broke the edge of guilt and led the way to proper understanding.

Four days later he again said: "Will not the Pakistan Government and the Union Government close the ranks and come to an amicable settlement with the assistance of impartial Indians? Or, has impartiality fled from India? I am sure it has not."

On 30th December, 1947, the Government of India made a formal reference to the Security Council of the United Nations in regard to Pakistan's aggression in Kashmir. Gandhiji again made it clear that his own views on the subject remained unchanged. Appealing in the course of his prayer address on the 4th January to Pakistan to remain clean (*pak*) as its name implied, he remarked that both Hindus and Muslims had resorted to cruel acts and made grievous blunders but that did not mean that this mad race should go on, and culminate in war. He pleaded for amity and goodwill which could enable the Union's representation to the U.N.O. to be withdrawn with dignity. This, he was sure, the U.N.O. itself would welcome. The main thing, however, was a real change of heart. The understanding should be genuine. To harbour hatred would be even worse than war.

The issue of Kashmir's accession became a decisive factor in the Indian Union's battle for the secular State ideal. Gandhiji used it to bring home to the Indian people the vital necessity for return to sanity of which they seemed for the time being to have taken leave. Kashmir's many routes passed through Pakistan. There was a narrow strip which joined Kashmir to East Punjab (India). How could Kashmir have trade with the Indian Union if Muslims could not safely pass through, much less live in, East Punjab? If the insanity continued in East Punjab, he warned, Kashmir's accession to the Union would be rendered nugatory. He hoped, however, that wisdom would dawn upon East Punjab.[34]

Next day, the 28th November, was Guru Nanak's birthday. Gandhiji was asked to attend a mammoth Hindu-Sikh celebration. He, however, hesitated as the Sikhs were said to be very displeased by the salutary advice that he had administered to them from time to time. But their spokesmen insisted. He was taken aback when they said that they had brought with them Sheikh Abdullah also to address

the meeting. How could Sheikh Abdullah be taken to a meeting of the Sikhs from the West Punjab, he wondered, when the relations between Hindus and Muslims in the Punjab were strained to the breaking point? But to his agreeable surprise he learnt that the Sikhs were most eager to hear Sheikh Abdullah as one who had brought together the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in Kashmir. The meeting was accordingly addressed by them both and their words were listened to with rapt attention.

* * *

Kashmir had not been able to escape its share of the communal trouble. Following upon the Punjab upheavals, in October, 1947, Muslim evacuee convoys going out of Jammu were attacked and massacred by non-Muslims who at times were directed by the R.S.S. The State army played a very discreditable part in these massacres. When Gandhiji came to know of it he said that the Maharaja, as the absolute ruler, could not be absolved from responsibility for such happenings; he was unfit to continue to hold power. He should, therefore, either abdicate or remain only as the titular head "even as the British king is"; full power *de jure* and *de facto* being transferred to the true representatives of the people.

> The instrument of accession stands as it is. It confers on or reserves certain rights for the ruler. I, as a private individual, have ventured to advise that he (the Maharaja) should waive or diminish the rights and perform the duty pertaining to the office of a Hindu prince. If I am wrong as to my facts, I should be corrected. If I err in my conception of Hinduism and of the duty of the Hindu prince, I am out of court.[35]

Some members of the Indian Government were distrustful of Sheikh Abdullah's ultimate aims. They were of the view that it would involve too great a political risk to act on Gandhiji's advice before things had settled down in Kashmir. The Maharaja, in the existing circumstances, could more safely be depended upon. It had given rise to a good deal of tension within the Cabinet. Gandhiji was not himself free from misgivings. But he said that it was far better to risk everything for the sake of a principle than to compromise one's principles for fear of a risk however great.

> If Sheikh Abdullah is erring in the discharge of his duty as the chief of the Cabinet or as a devout Muslim, he should certainly step aside and give place to a better man. It is on the Kashmir soil that Islam and Hinduism are being weighed. If both pull their weight correctly and in the same direction, the chief actors will cover themselves with glory and nothing can move them from

their joint credit. My sole hope and prayer is that Kashmir should become a beacon light to this benighted sub-continent.[36]

In the matter of strict justice being meted out to the Maharaja Gandhiji was even more uncompromising than the Kashmir leaders themselves seemed to be at the time and he continued to fight for it tooth and nail right till the end.

* * *

Pakistan leaders continued to exploit the Kashmir issue to call a *jehad* against the *kafirs* of the Indian Union and openly invited the tribesmen to join in the crusade.

It was put to Gandhiji by someone from Lahore styling himself as the President, Kashmir Freedom League, that as Kashmir was the root cause of the tension between the two Dominions, withdrawal of "aggressive" Indian troops from Kashmir and handing Kashmir over "to whomsoever it rightly belongs" would help to bring about a rapprochement between the two countries and clear the way for the establishment of Hindu-Muslim unity which was so dear to his heart.

The naivete of it hurt Gandhiji. He had never learnt to be generous at the cost of a principle. His non-violence was of a tough sort. Vicarious magnanimity had no place in it. Where a moral issue was concerned it could be pitiless as the surgeon's knife. Everybody who came in close contact with him knew this. The toughs of the world discovered it for themselves and were generally grateful for it in the long run.

Would the Muslims continue to look upon the Hindus and Sikhs as their "enemies" and *vice versa* till the Kashmir issue was settled? he asked on the evening of 20th January, 1948. The army of the Indian Union had not entered Kashmir on their own; they had gone there at the call of the ruler of the State and the leaders of the Kashmir Muslims. "If the invaders, tribesmen and others, would withdraw and leave the issue to the rebels in Poonch and the rest of Kashmir without any aid from outside, it would be time to ask the Indian troops to withdraw."

The suggestion that Kashmir should go to whomsoever it rightly belonged, he went on to observe, was perfectly true. Who were the rightful owners of Kashmir? The Maharaja was there and the Indian Government could not ignore him. Ultimately it was for the people of Kashmir to decide their own fate. Hence the Government of India had unilaterally decided to ascertain their wishes as soon as the requisite conditions for it were forthcoming.

Some people who have partition as a ready solution for every difficulty arising out of aggression, except when their own country is concerned, suggested that, following the pattern of India's partition,

Kashmir, too, should be divided — Jammu, with a predominantly Hindu population going to India and the Kashmir Valley to Pakistan. Characterising in one of his prayer addresses the talk about the division of Kashmir as "fantastic", Gandhiji indignantly asked if it was not more than enough that India had been divided into two? One would have thought it impossible for man to divide a country which God had made one. Yet it had happened and the Congress and the Muslim League had both accepted it though each for its own reasons. But that did not mean that the process of dividing should be further extended. If Kashmir was to be divided, why not also the other States? Where would this process stop?

In the last week of January, 1948, Mr. Kingsley Martin of *The New Statesman and Nation* saw Gandhiji at Delhi. Among other things, he discussed with him the question of Kashmir's partition. He querried: (1) Why it was impracticable to give Poonch to Pakistan and (2) whether "arbitration" might not be a means of avoiding a frontier war between India and Pakistan which would be unending. Gandhiji told him that any such thing would set a very bad example to others. There were pockets everywhere — Murshidabad in West Bengal on the border of East Pakistan, for instance. Then there was the example of Kathiawad. The vital difference between the policy of the Indian Union and that of Pakistan was that the former never believed in dismemberment while the Pakistan leaders did. Pakistan wanted to vivisect Kathiawad by getting Junagadh to accede to that Dominion. Vivisection of Kathiawad, which was indivisible, was quite unthinkable. The whole basis of partition was wrong. He had, therefore, said a very firm "no" to the idea of partition of Kashmir, when it had been put before him by two "distinguished people".[37] He himself, he added, was working for a "heart-union" between Hindus and Muslims not only in India but also in Pakistan and would continue his efforts in that direction.

Commenting on this, Kingsley Martin afterwards recorded: "My affection for Gandhi and my knowledge that he was a great man were not impaired by the discovery that he was still a Hindu nationalist and an imperfect disciple of the Mahatma."[38] Back of it was the subtle assumption — unconscious perhaps — that Hindus and Muslims were two nations. The Valley of Kashmir had a Muslim majority, ergo, by "elementary justice" it "belonged" to Pakistan! To which nation did then belong the forty millions of Muslims in India and a few millions of non-Muslims who were still left in Pakistan? As has been shown in these pages, the two-nation theory had never been accepted as the basis for Partition. Historically it was an untruth, ideologically a monstrosity.

Gandhiji's fears in regard to the reference to the U.N.O. came true before long. After a series of denials and prevarications, Pakistan

was ultimately driven to admit that its troops had participated in the invasion of Kashmir. The United Nations Commission put on record their finding that on Kashmir soil Pakistan had violated India's sovereignty. But the U.N.O. would not "name" Pakistan as "aggressor".

Pakistan preferred a series of counter-complaints against India, including one of "genocide", which were put on a par with India's, and ended up by appearing as the "aggrieved" party. The British representative in the United Nations, in pursuance of the old British tradition of Anglo-Muslim League collaboration, sided with Pakistan, India being put in the dock.

8

When the Kashmir invasion by the tribesmen was at its height, and the invading army composed of Afridis and the like, ably officered, was advancing upon Srinagar, burning and looting villages all along the route, Gandhiji remarked in one of his prayer addresses that it was difficult to believe that this intrusion could take place without some kind of encouragement from the Pakistan Government.[39] He could not escape the conclusion, he said, that the Pakistan Government was directly or indirectly encouraging the raid. The Chief Minister of the Frontier Province was reported to have openly encouraged the raid and had even appealed to the Islamic world for help. It was, therefore, right for the Union Government to save the fair city by rushing troops to Srinagar. He would not shed a tear if the little Union force was wiped out bravely defending Kashmir like the Spartans at Thermopylæ nor would he mind Sheikh Abdullah and his Muslim, Hindu and Sikh comrades dying at their post in defence of Kashmir. That would be a glorious example to the rest of India. It would make the people of India forget that the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were ever one another's enemies.

Some people were shocked by Gandhiji's expressing his appreciation of the Indian Union Government's action in sending troops for the defence of Kashmir. His exhortation to the defenders to be wiped out to the last man in clearing Kashmir soil of the raiders rather than submit was even dubbed as "Churchillian". He had dared to advise, it was said, Churchill, Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese that they should adopt his technique of non-violence when they were likely to lose all. Why did he not give that advice to his friends in the Congress Government when forsaking non-violence they sent armed assistance to Kashmir? Was it a case of being virtuous at other's cost?

Gandhiji answered that in neither case had there been any lapse from his creed of non-violence. His Ahimsa did not forbid him from

denying credit where credit was due even though the person to whom credit had to be given was a believer in violence.[40]

Thus he had not hesitated to admire Netaji Subhas Bose's patriotism, resourcefulness and bravery, though he did not approve of his method of violence. As early as 1921, after deep thought, he had arrived at the conclusion that while a believer in non-violence is pledged not to resort, either directly or indirectly, to violence or physical force in defence of any thing, he is not precluded from helping men or institutions that are themselves not based on non-violence:

> If the reverse were the case, I would, for instance, be precluded from helping India to attain Swaraj, because the future Parliament of India under Swaraj, I know for certain, will be having some military and police forces; or to take a domestic illustration, I may not help a son to secure justice, because forsooth he is not a believer in non-violence. . . . My business is to refrain from doing any violence myself, and to induce by persuasion and service as many of God's creatures as I can to join me in the belief and practice.[41]

Even when both parties believe in violence, there is often such a thing as justice on one side or the other. For instance, a man who has been robbed has justice on his side, even though he may be preparing to regain the lost property by force. He would be untrue to his faith, said Gandhiji, if he refused to assist in a just cause "any men or measures that did not entirely coincide with the principle of non-violence."[42] Whilst all violence is bad and must be condemned in the abstract, he observed on another occasion, "it is permissible for, it is even the duty of, a believer in Ahimsa to distinguish between the aggressor and the defender . . . (and to) side with the defender in a non-violent manner."[43]

After the commencement of the Second World War, Gandhiji was asked how, if war itself was wrong, he could give his moral support to the democracies in their fight against aggression. Without a moment's hesitation he replied: "I believe all war to be wholly wrong. But if we scrutinise the motives of two warring parties, we may find one to be in the right and the other in the wrong. For instance, if A wishes to seize B's country, B is obviously the wronged one. Both fight with arms. I do not believe in violent warfare but all the same B, whose cause is just, deserves my moral help and blessings."[44]

Two years later he again wrote: "My resistance to war does not carry me to the point of thwarting those who wish to take part in it. I reason with them. I put before them the better way and leave them to make the choice."[45]

In the present case Gandhiji did not approve of the use of arms by the Union Government for aiding the Kashmiris or of the Kashmiris resorting to arms but he could not on that account possibly withhold his admiration for their patriotism, resourcefulness and courage. He had no doubt, he said, that if both the relieving troops and the Kashmiri defenders died heroically to a man, it would "perhaps" change the face of India, but if the defence was wholly non-violent in intent and action he would have not to use even the word "perhaps". "For the transformation would then be a certainty — even to the extent of converting to the defenders' view the Union Cabinet, if not also the Pakistan Cabinet."[46]

Begum Abdullah while at Delhi, after her husband's release, invited one of Gandhiji's party to accompany her to Kashmir. Gandhiji told her that nothing would please him more than that, starting with this co-worker, the Kashmiris should form themselves into a non-violent army that would "defy the might of the raiders without the use of arms — not even their fists — and dying at their post of duty without fear and without anger against the assailants provide an exhibition of heroism as yet unknown to history." Kashmir would then become "a holy land shedding its fragrance not only throughout India but the world."

His advice to his friends — the Kashmir leaders and the members of the Union Cabinet — was thus in no way different from what he had given to Churchill, Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese, viz. that those who had the courage and determination to be wiped out to the last man in resisting the invaders could not put their courage and determination to a better and more effective use than by offering to be wiped out without anger or retaliation in their hearts while refusing to submit.

But he could not kindle that faith either in the Kashmir leaders or his Congress friends in the Indian Union Government. It was not for him to impose his views on those who lacked that faith. People cannot be made non-violent by compulsion. As he had so often explained before, non-violence cannot be taught to a person who fears to die and has no power of resistance. "Before he can understand non-violence, he has to be taught to stand his ground and even suffer death in the attempt to defend himself against the aggressor who bids fair to overwhelm him. To do otherwise would be to confirm his cowardice and take him further away from non-violence. Whilst I may not actually help him to retaliate, I must not let a coward seek shelter behind non-violence so-called."[47]

His fundamental attitude on war had not changed. He was *not* reconciled to war in Kashmir or for that matter anywhere. He *knew* non-violence was more *effective* than armed force. He was engaged in perfecting his weapon — which, though it had demonstrated its efficacy

in the struggle for independence, needed to be refurbished and overhauled — perhaps redesigned for the duty which now awaited it. That it could successfully be so redesigned he had not the slightest doubt. He had even an outline of a plan forming in his mind in this regard. But what, in the meantime, were they — the Union Government and the people of Kashmir — to do in the face of the aggression that bade fair to overwhelm them? His philosophy of non-violence provided no escape from the duty to resist evil with all one's strength. They had to act.

He admitted that he had lost his original hold upon his Congress colleagues. He confessed his own impotence in that his word lacked the power which perfect mastery over self, as described in the concluding lines of the second chapter of the Gita gave. He lacked *tapashcharya*, the power of penance, needed to kindle in them the faith that filled him. He could, therefore, only pray, he remarked at one of his prayer meetings, and he invited others to pray with him that if it pleased God, He might arm him with that indispensable qualification.[48]

He did not part company with the Indian Government or the Congress leaders because he did not expect to be able to find another Government or another set of leaders with whom he could cooperate with a better chance of success for the realisation of his ideals. The alternative would have been to non-cooperate with society and the Government under which he lived. His non-violence was not a cloistered virtue meant only for the recluse or the cave-dweller but an instrument of social change, whose efficacy and worth were to be proved

> "Not in Utopia, — subterranean fields, —
> Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
> But in the very world, which is the world
> of all of us, — the place where, in the end,
> We find our happiness, or not at all!"

9

How is one in day-to-day practice to reconcile the conflicting demands of the duty of resistance to evil on the one hand and of Ahimsa on the other? The safe rule, said Gandhiji, is that one should ceaselessly strive to realise Ahimsa in every walk of life and in a crisis act in a manner that is *most natural* to him. The result will be non-violence to the extent to which he has successfully striven. "If the thought of Ahimsa fills our mind always, our spontaneous reaction in a crisis will be non-violent. The ultimate criterion is not the appearance or the outward form of our action but the feeling within us."[49]

A girl, for instance, flung a shoe at a ruffian who had insulted her in a public place. A lot of people saw it. The ruffian took to his heels. Later he came and apologised to her. Was her action non-violent? she asked. Gandhiji wrote to her: "If your object was merely to teach the scamp a lesson, your action was not different in kind from his. He hurled an insult on you, you hurled your shoe in return. . . . If, on the other hand, your action was inspired by compassion for the bully, the object being to reform, not to punish him, the use of force by you was an expression of your non-violence. The test in the present case would be: Was the ruffian overpowered by physical fear or was it your purity that overwhelmed him when he saw that you treated him more in sorrow and out of concern for him, than in anger? Let me give an illustration from my own life. Miss Schlesin smoked a cigarette under my very nose to provoke me. I gave her a slap in the face, snatched the cigarette from her and flung it away. For the first time in her life she burst into tears in my presence, apologised to me and wrote to me just two short sentences: 'I shall never do it again. I can now see your love.' "

"Supposing in the presence of superior brute force one feels helpless, would he be justified in using just enough force to prevent the perpetration of wrong?" Gandhiji was once asked.

He answered: "Yes, but there need not be that feeling of helplessness if there is real non-violence in you. To feel helpless in the presence of violence is not non-violence but cowardice. Cowardice must not be confused with non-violence."[50]

"Suppose someone came and hurled insult at you, should you allow yourself to be thus humiliated?" he was again asked.

"If you feel humiliated, you will be justified in slapping the bully in the face or taking whatever action you might deem necessary to vindicate your self-respect. The use of force, in the circumstance, would be the natural consequence if you are not a coward. But if you have assimilated the non-violent spirit, there should be no feeling of humiliation in you. Your non-violent behaviour should then either make the bully feel ashamed of himself and prevent the insult, or make you proof against it so that the insult would remain, so to say, in the bully's mouth and not touch you at all."[51]

"Supposing there is . . . a lunatic run amuck . . . (or) an infuriated mob . . . would you justify the use of physical force to restrain the lunatic in the first case, or allow the use, say, of tear-gas in the latter?"

"I will excuse it for all time. But I would not say it is justified from the non-violent standpoint. I would say that there was not that degree of non-violence in you to give you confidence in purely non-violent treatment. If you had, your simple presence would be sufficient to pacify the lunatic. Non-violence . . . is not a mechanical thing. *You do not become non-violent by merely saying, 'I shall not use force.'*

It must be felt in the heart.... When there is that feeling it will express itself through some action. It may be a sign, a glance, even silence. But, such as it is, it will melt the heart of the wrong-doer and check the wrong."[52] (Italics mine).

Time and again in the pursuit of the ideal of Ahimsa, one comes up against a series of paradoxes but that does not either invalidate the ideal or preclude fruitful pursuit for its full realisation. Gandhiji resolved the paradox thus:

> Life is an aspiration. Its mission is to strive after perfection, which is self-realisation. The ideal must not be lowered because of our weaknesses and imperfections.... One who hooks his fortunes to Ahimsa, the law of love, daily lessens the circle of destruction, and to that extent promotes Life and Love; he who swears by *himsa*, the law of hate, daily widens the circle of destruction, and to that extent promotes Death and Hate.[53]

10

So much for individual conduct. What is the role of a man of non-violence, as a part of society, in a world full of "strife, turmoil and passions"?

Life is governed by a multitude of forces, answers Gandhiji. It would be smooth-sailing if one could determine the course of one's actions by one general principle, whose application at a given moment was so obvious as not to need even a moment's reflection. But he could not recall a single act, said Gandhiji, which could be so easily determined.

In his Ashram, for instance, he had a few acres of land. The crops, however, were in imminent peril of being destroyed by monkeys. He believed in the sacredness of all life and hence he regarded it as a breach of Ahimsa to inflict any injury on the monkeys. But he did not hesitate to advise an attack on the monkeys, in order to save the crops. "I would like to avoid this evil. I can avoid it by leaving or breaking up the institution. I do not do so because I do not expect to be able to find a society where there will be no agriculture and therefore no destruction of some life. In fear and trembling, in humility and penance, I therefore participate in the injury inflicted on the monkeys, hoping some day to find a way out."[54]

Similarly, as a confirmed war resister, he had never given himself training in the use of destructive weapons and that was perhaps how, as he put it, he had escaped direct destruction of human life. But so long as he lived under a system of Government based on force and voluntarily partook of the many facilities and privileges it

created for him, he felt he was bound to help that Government to the extent of his ability when it was engaged in a war unless he non-cooperated with that Government and renounced to the utmost of his capacity the privileges it offered to him.

"I could not, it would be madness for me to sever my connection with the society to which I belong," he wrote in his journal.[55] And so in his early life he was driven by his very quest for non-violence to participate in three wars. "I had no thought (then) of non-cooperating with the British Government. My position regarding the Government is totally different today and hence I could not voluntarily participate in its wars and I should risk imprisonment and even the gallows if I was forced to take up arms or otherwise take part in its military operations."[56]

That did not solve the riddle. "If there was a National Government," he wrote in *Young India* of 13th September, 1928, "whilst I should not take any direct part in any war, I can conceive occasions when it would be my duty to vote for the military training of those who wish to take it. For I know that all its members do not believe in non-violence to the extent I do. It is not possible to make a person or a society non-violent by compulsion."

Lest this might cause confusion to some of his readers, he added: "Non-violence works in a most mysterious manner. Often a man's actions defy analysis in terms of non-violence; equally often his actions may wear the appearance of violence when he is absolutely non-violent in the highest sense of the term and is subsequently found so to be. . . . I am painfully aware of my failings. But the light within is steady and clear. . . . Would that all the acts alleged against me were found to be wholly indefensible rather than that by any act of mine non-violence was held to be compromised or that I was ever thought to be in favour of violence or untruth in any shape or form! Not violence, not untruth but non-violence, truth is the law of our being."

In 1942, he advocated non-cooperation with the Allied war effort, unless they proved their *bona fides* by applying to India the principles for which the war was professed to be fought. The record of the Congress Ministries in the Provinces had already given a fair indication of what the complexion of the National Government under independence was likely to be.

"Will free India carry out total mobilisation and adopt the methods of total war?" Gandhiji was asked.

"I cannot say whether free India will take part in militarism or choose to go the non-violent way. But I can say without hesitation that if I can turn India to non-violence, I will certainly do so. If I succeed in converting forty crores of people to non-violence, it will be a tremendous thing, a wonderful transformation."[57]

"But you won't oppose a militarist effort by civil disobedience?"

"I have no such desire. I cannot oppose free India's will (in this regard) with civil disobedience. It would be wrong."[58]

"To what extent will you carry out your policy after freedom is gained?"

"What policy the National Government will adopt, I cannot say. I may not even survive it. . . . If I do, I would advise the adoption of non-violence to the utmost extent possible and that will be India's great contribution to the peace of the world and the establishment of a new world order. I expect that with the existence of so many martial races in India, all of whom will have a voice in the Government of the day, the national policy will incline towards militarism of a modified character. *I shall certainly hope that all the effort for the last twenty-two years to show the efficacy of non-violence as a political force will not have gone in vain and a strong party representing true non-violence will exist in the country.*"[59] (Italics mine).

In 1946, when the hour of decision was close at hand, he set about to re-examine the proposition in all its practical bearings.

"How can one, who has spent his whole life in fighting, take to Ahimsa with success?" he was asked. "Are not the two incompatible?"

"I do not agree," he replied. "Badshah Khan is a Pathan. But today he has become a soldier of non-violence. Tolstoy, too, served in the army. Yet he became the high-priest of non-violence in Europe. We have not yet realised the power that is non-violence. If the Government had not arrested me in 1942, I would have shown how to fight Japan by non-violence."[60]

"What should be the training and the discipline for a non-violent army? Should not certain aspects of conventional military training form a part of the syllabus?"

"A very small part of the preliminary training received by the military is common to the non-violent army. These are discipline, drill, singing in chorus, flag hoisting, signalling and the like. *Even this is not absolutely necessary and the basis is different.* The positively necessary training for a non-violent army is an immovable faith in God, willing and perfect obedience to the chief of the non-violent army and perfect inward and outward cooperation between the units of the army."[61] (Italics mine).

"Is not non-violent resistance by the militarily strong more effective than that by the militarily weak?"

"This is a contradiction in terms. There can be no non-violence offered by the militarily strong. . . . What is true is that if those who were at one time strong in armed might, change their mind, they will be better able to demonstrate their non-violence to the world and, therefore, also to their opponents. Those who are strong in non-violence

will not mind whether they are opposed by the militarily weak people or the strongest."[62]

"Surely, it is no breach of Ahimsa to use the sword in self-defence?"

"Even Wavell, Auchinleck or Hitler does not use the sword without necessity. But that does not make it Ahimsa. It is *himsa*, whatever its justification."[63]

"Does not the knowledge that the opponent is wedded to non-violence often encourage the bully?"

"The bully has his opportunity when he has to face non-violence of the weak. Non-violence of the strong is any day stronger than that of the bravest soldier fully armed or a whole host."[64]

"Is it not better under existing circumstances that countries like India and England should maintain full military efficiency while resolving to give non-violent resistance a reasonable trial before taking any military step?"

"Under no circumstances can India and England give non-violent resistance a reasonable chance whilst they are both maintaining full military efficiency. At the same time, it is perfectly true that all military powers carry on negotiations for peaceful adjustment of rival disputes. But here we are not discussing preliminary peace parleys before appealing to the arbitrament of war. We are discussing a final substitute for armed conflict called war, in naked terms mass murder."[65]

A correspondent put to Gandhiji a fundamental question: "Is it possible for a modern State, which is essentially based on force, to offer non-violent resistance for countering internal as well as external forces of disorder? Or is it necessary that people wanting to offer non-violent resistance should first of all divest themselves of State authority and place themselves *vis-a-vis* the opponent entirely in a private capacity?"

Gandhiji replied: "It is not possible for a modern State based on force non-violently to resist forces of disorder, whether external or internal. . . . (But) it is claimed that *a State can be based on non-violence*, i.e. it can offer non-violent resistance against a world combination based on armed forces. Such a State was Asoka's. The example can be repeated."[66] (Italics mine).

The reply to the second question came later. It will be found in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER XX

TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

1

THE MUSLIM festival of Id fell on the 26th October. Gandhiji felt ill at ease lest some mishap should mar it. Sardar Patel, however, assured him that he had taken all necessary precautions. On the auspicious day, Muslims began visiting Gandhiji from early morning. Among them were his old friends — the Maulanas of Delhi. "With what face can I wish them a happy Id?" he muttered to himself. To the Muslim visitors, he said: "Ahimsa is always tested in the midst of *himsa*, kindness in the midst of cruelty, truth in the midst of falsehood, love in the midst of hate. This is the eternal law. If on this auspicious day, we all made a sacred resolve not to spill blood for blood but to offer ours to be shed instead, we would make history. Jesus Christ prayed God from the Cross to forgive those who had crucified him. It is my constant prayer to God that He may give me the strength to intercede even for my assassin. And it should be your prayer, too, that your faithful servant may be given that strength to forgive."

In a conversation with a friend from the Ramakrishna Mission, he narrated the story of Shibi Raja as told in one of the ancient Hindu scriptures. To test Shibi, God assumed the form of a hawk hot in pursuit of a quail. The bird took shelter with Shibi. The hawk claimed the bird as his prize. Shibi offered to the hawk an equivalent weight of his own flesh as ransom. But no matter how much flesh he took out of his body, it could not balance the weight of the live quail in the opposite scale. In the end he put himself in the scale. Then alone was the required weight made up. The life of the bird was saved when he offered his own. The moral, Gandhiji pointed out, was that "we have to carry our Ahimsa even to that limit. Such Ahimsa never fails."

Things were not *comme il faut* in Delhi. Complaints had reached Gandhiji that in some parts of the Union, the Hindus were demanding that the Muslims living in their midst should give up eating fish and mutton on the ground that the smell of cooking meat was offensive to Hindus brought up in the orthodox tradition. Gandhiji was himself a strict vegetarian and Kasturba Gandhi had been brought up

even in a more orthodox Hindu tradition. Yet when it was suggested during a voyage that his meals should be cooked outside the ship's galley to spare Kasturba the sights and smells of fish and meat, he firmly put his foot down saying that it would be an insult to the ship's company who had been so kind and hospitable to him. And so throughout that voyage Kasturba cooked in the ship's galley.

Gandhiji expostulated with the Hindus. Vegetarians constituted a minority even among them. What right had they to impose their will on the Muslims? Similarly, some Hindus wanted legal prohibition of cow slaughter to be introduced in the Indian Union. Was the Union to be a theocratic State and were the tenets of Hinduism to be imposed on non-Hindus? "I hope not. The world expects not littleness or fanaticism from India but greatness and goodness which would serve as a beacon light to the whole world in the prevailing darkness."[1]

Some cases of harassment of Christians too had been brought to Gandhiji's notice. Like a watchful mother, he noted with deep concern these ugly symptoms. A broad tolerance and meticulous respect for the rights of others was the very essence of freedom. Unless the malady was properly treated, it might easily prove fatal to their new-born democracy.

Gandhiji to Rajaji 5th November, 1947

> On the surface things are sufficiently nice but the undercurrent leaves little hope. I wonder if Bengal will hold out for all time. Let us hope. . . . Yes, Rama is my only refuge.

Five days later, Gandhiji set out by car to pay a visit to Muslim refugees at Panipat. What he saw there shocked him. There were 20,000 Hindu refugees, too, in Panipat from the West Punjab. Their plight was no better than that of the Muslim refugees.

At the evening prayer meeting Gandhiji let himself go. The Chief Minister of East Punjab was a veteran Congressman and an old colleague. But if Panipat was a sample of his workmanship, he observed, it was a sad reflection on his Government. Why were the refugees dumped anywhere without notice? Why were arrangements for their reception inadequate? Why should the officers not know beforehand who and how many were coming?

Even more disquieting was the information that 150,000 Muslims in the Gurgaon district had been frightened into leaving their homes. They with their families and cattle were camping alongside the road in the severe winter of the Punjab with a 300-mile march in prospect.

Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, Christian and all others were equally the sons and daughters of India. That was the ideal he had set before himself ever since his childhood. But it seemed to be melting away

with the achievement of independence. His Ahimsa did not allow him to weep. From early youth, he had steeled his heart to combat the sorrows that came under his notice. The seers of old had taught that one who was full of Ahimsa had to have a heart softer than a rose-petal and harder than flint.[2]

His whole heart went out in sympathy to the refugees but he refused to allow them to indulge in cheap, self-pity. "It must be admitted," he bluntly told them, "that there is a certain amount of lack of resourcefulness in you which adds to your misery." He hauled the Sikhs over the coals for the prevalence of the drink habit among them and for increase in the consumption of spiritous liquors in the capital after their influx. He castigated the richer refugees for isolating themselves from the poor ones and indulging in selfish ease and luxury instead of sharing the discomforts and trials of the latter. They had all to swim or sink together. The calamity that had overtaken them was a testing time for them all. Whether they would come out of it victorious or defeated depended on themselves alone.

> I have not the least doubt that this tragedy can be turned to good account by the correct behaviour of the sufferers. . . . In this consummation, I have no doubt that all specially qualified men and women such as doctors, lawyers, *vaids*, *hakims*, nurses, traders and bankers should make common cause with the others and lead a coordinated camp life in perfect cooperation, feeling not like helpless dependents on charity, but resourceful, independent men and women making light of their sufferings, a life full of promise for the future and worthy of imitation by the people amongst whom the camp life is lived. Then, when the professional people have been inured to corporate, unselfish life and when they can be spared from these camps, they would branch out into villages and otherwise, shedding the fragrance of their presence wherever they may happen to be.[3]

In the meantime it was for them—refugees as well as non-refugees—not to allow the surrounding atmosphere of distrust, inhumanity, cruelty and revenge to dehumanise them or to numb their sensibilities but to nourish the springs of human kindness within them by collecting golden deeds, wherever they could be found and sharing the same with others. He gave an instance of two Muslim friends who had sent him blankets for non-Muslim refugees and money for buying more. Asked to distribute them themselves, they would not hear of it. Their gift was, they said, for Gandhiji to distribute among the Hindu and Sikh refugees. They admitted that there was a time when they had found fault with him. But they were now convinced that he was and had ever been the friend of all and enemy of none. A friend had told

him that there was at least one Muslim family in West Pakistan, within his knowledge, who had given shelter to a Sikh friend. Not only that. This good Samaritan had set apart a room in his house in which the Sikh friend's Granth Saheb (Sikh scriptures) could be kept with due respect. He had been reliably informed, added Gandhiji, that instances of Hindus and Sikhs sheltering Muslims and *vice versa* even in the midst of the universal insanity could be multiplied.

* * *

Mountbatten was to go home on short leave. Princess (now Queen) Elizabeth was to wed his nephew, who since childhood had been brought up in the Mountbatten home. Gandhiji had spoken in one of his meetings with Lord Mountbatten of sending a wedding present. Mountbatten was delighted. "But what can I send?" Gandhiji asked. "You know I have no wordly possessions." After some discussion, it was decided that he should send something made by himself. On returning to his residence he sent for some yarn of his own spinning and had it made into a tea-cloth.

Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten 9th November, 1947

> This little thing is made out of doubled yarn of my own spinning. The knitting was done by a Punjabi girl. . . . Please give the bride and the bridegroom this with my blessings, with the wish that they would have a long and happy life of service of men.

Lord and Lady Mountbatten left by air the next day. They personally delivered the gift to Princess Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace. At the wedding, it was prominently exhibited among the wedding gifts at St. James's. On his return, Lord Mountbatten conveyed to Gandhiji a personal message of appreciation and thanks from the Princess and the Prince-consort. The Princess, Mountbatten reported, was extremely touched that Gandhiji should have made this very fine gesture to them and she said that she always intended to keep it in a place of safety as a precious souvenir and not to use it as a tea-cloth, as she valued its historic association. She must have kept it with special care for, seven years later, when a reference was made to her about it, she was able immediately to lay her hand upon it.

What a fitting and glorious finale to India's non-violent struggle for freedom in which neither side found itself to be the loser in the end and which instead of enmity and bitterness, left only the fragrance of friendship and goodwill behind!

* * *

Another Diwali found India in mourning. "I can see in this misery no cause for joy," Gandhiji observed on the eve of the festival. "A

resolute and wise refusal to take part in festivities will be an incentive to introspection and self-purification."[4]

What they needed most in that hour, he said, was not man-made illuminations but "the light of love" in their hearts. No victory in Kashmir or Junagadh would avail them anything if they did not feel the presence of God within them and put aside mutual hatred and suspicion. Diwali could never be properly celebrated until they brought back to India all those Muslims who had fled out of fear.[5]

A leading Hindu from Lahore came with an old friend of Gandhiji's and said to him that he was a believer in non-violence. He had fled from the West Punjab out of weakness but he was now prepared to return there and face even death as Gandhiji had asked all Hindus to do. Gandhiji told him that it would have been grand if at the very outset he had on his own acted like that. His example might then have lent courage and strength to his Hindu brethren in the West Punjab and moved even the Muslims. But having come away, the most effective way in which he could do his duty now was to purge his heart of any trace of bitterness or resentment against the Muslims that might have crept in and to use his influence with the fellow Hindu refugees to restore normal conditions in Delhi. This would create favourable atmosphere for the return of all Hindu and Sikh refugees to Pakistan.

A Muslim deputation of the Aligarh Students' Union came and said to Gandhiji that they were eager to go among Hindu and Sikh refugees in camps and distribute blankets, clothes and the like among them as a token of communal goodwill. But in their case, Gandhiji told them, this was not enough. It would fall flat. The least they should do was to go to Pakistan and boldly tell the authorities and the people there to induce the Hindu and Sikh refugees to return to their homes with full guarantee of safety and self-respect, just as he was telling the Hindus and Sikhs to do in regard to the Muslim evacuees in the Indian Union. The deputationists accepted his advice.[6]

2

It was now four months since the All-India Congress Committee had met. Mighty changes had taken place in the meantime. Foreign rule had been liquidated but its liquidation had been followed by cataclysmic upheavals that hardly anybody had foreseen creating colossal problems which could shake the very foundations of any Government or social order. The Union Government had managed to survive these upheavals, it had successfully met the threat of chaos in the capital. But all about them there was wreckage and a turmoil of conflicting trends and ideologies in the minds of Congressmen.

The Congress had been compelled to agree to division but it had never accepted the two-nation theory. There was a danger, however, that under the continued pressure of refugee immigration from Pakistan, it might be driven to practice what it had repudiated in principle.

Then there was the question of refugee rehabilitation. It would take one shape if it was temporary and another if it was permanent. Was permanent settlement of the displaced persons to be the ultimate goal of the Union Government or their repatriation? Upon correct decision on these issues by the All-India Congress Committee depended the future.

The discussion in the Congress Working Committee revealed a deep cleavage of opinion on the question whether or not Hindu and Sikh refugees from West Punjab should return to and remain there. Gandhiji maintained that it was possible for them to go back and they must; there was no other course. The condition was that the Muslims should likewise be able to stay with safety and self-respect in India, including Delhi and its environs. Sardar Patel had grave doubts as to the first; and though he agreed, in principle, with Gandhiji as regards the second, on security grounds he questioned the wisdom of allowing large numbers of people with bad record and with secret loyalty still with the Muslim League and Pakistan to remain in and around Delhi. Between these two view-points there was a tug of war.

In the end though the Working Committee passed no definite resolution on the subject to be placed before the All-India Congress Committee, Gandhiji was able to announce at his prayer meeting on the 6th November, that they were unanimously of the view that the Congress, which had stood from its inception for perfect communal harmony, could not in any circumstance go back upon that ideal. The Committee was further of the view that even though the Congress might for a time find itself in a minority, they should cheerfully face the ordeal rather than succumb to the prevailing insanity.

Two days later Gandhiji's voice was heard for the last time in the All-India Congress Committee. Ever since its inception over a quarter of a century ago, it had been guided by him, whether he was present or not. A straight-from-the-shoulder talk by the Father of the Nation, it was listened to by all sections of the House with the respect it deserved. Each period was a sledge-hammer blow aimed at the anvil of their conscience to strike the fire of the old Congress tradition and the ideals that had made the Congress a power without a rival in the land:

"I have seen enough to realise that though not all of us have gone mad, a sufficiently large number have lost their heads. . . . It is to me obvious that if we do not cure ourselves of this insanity, we shall lose the freedom we have won. You must understand and recognise the gravity of the plight we are in. . . .

"You represent the vast ocean of Indian humanity. You will not allow it to be said that the Congress consists of a handful of people who rule the country. At least I will not allow it. . . .

"When we were fighting for our freedom, we bore a heavy responsibility. But today, when we have achieved freedom, our responsibility has grown a hundred-fold. . . . There are many places where a Muslim cannot live in security. . . . I would not be satisfied if you said that it could not be helped or that you had no part in it. . . . We have to fight against this insanity and find a cure for it. . . . I confess that I have not yet found it. . . .

"It is the basic creed of the Congress that India is the home of Muslims no less than that of Hindus. . . . I do not need to quote the authority of the Congress constitution to support my claim.

"Some say that if we perpetrate worse atrocities on Muslims here than those perpetrated on Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan, it will teach the Muslims in Pakistan a salutary lesson. They will indeed be taught a lesson, but what will happen to you in the meanwhile? The wicked sink under the weight of their own evil. Must we sink with them?

"I hold it to be an impossibility that three and a half crores of Muslims can be driven away to Pakistan. What crime have they committed? The Muslim League may have been culpable but not every Muslim. If you think that they are all traitors and fifth-columnists, shoot them by all means; but to assume that they are all criminals, because they are Muslims, is wrong. If you bully them, beat them, and threaten them, what can they do but run away to Pakistan? After all, life is dear to them. But such conduct is unworthy of you. Thereby you will degrade the Congress, degrade your religion and degrade the nation.

"If you realise this, then it is your duty to call back all those Muslims who have been obliged to flee to Pakistan. India is big enough to keep them as well as all the Hindus and Sikh refugees who have fled here from Pakistan. Of course those Muslims who believe in Pakistan and wish to seek their happiness there are welcome to migrate. For them there is no bar. . . .

"As things are, we cannot hold our heads high in the world today and we have to confess that we have been obliged to copy Pakistan in its misdeeds and have thereby justified its ways. . . .

"I repeat that it is your prime duty to treat Muslims as your brothers, no matter what happens in Pakistan. . . . Restraint will add to your strength. . . . If, on the other hand, you approve of what has happened, you must change the very creed and character of the All-India Congress Committee. This is the root issue before you. . . . Let all Muslims who have left their homes and fled to Pakistan come back here. . . . Whatever Pakistan may do now, sooner or

later it will be obliged by the pressure of world opinion to conform. Then war will not be necessary and you will not have to empty your exchequer. . . .

"A hundred and fifty thousand Muslims near Gurgaon are about to be sent to Pakistan. It is said they are no better than criminal tribes and had better be sent to Pakistan. I cannot understand the logic of this argument. There were criminal tribes in India during the British regime. Was there any talk of deporting them then? It is wrong of us to send them away because they are 'criminal'. Our duty should be to reform them. How shameful it is for us that we should force them to trudge three hundred miles! I am against all such forced exodus. . . .

"I know some people are saying, the Congress has surrendered its soul to the Muslims. Gandhi! Let him rave as he will. He is a wash-out. Jawaharlal is no better. As regards Sardar Patel, there is something in him. A portion of him is sound Hindu, but he, too, is after all a Congressman! Such talk will not help us. . . . Violent rowdyism will not save either Hinduism or Sikhism. Such is not the teaching of Guru Granth Saheb. Christianity does not teach these ways. Nor has Islam been saved by the sword. I hear many things about the R.S.S. I have heard it said that the R.S.S. is at the root of all this mischief. . . . Hinduism cannot be saved by orgies of murder. You are now a free people. You have to preserve your freedom. You can do so if you are humane and brave and ever vigilant, or else a day will come when you will rue the folly which made this lovely prize slip from your hands. I hope such a day will never come."

The session, on the whole, was a personal triumph for Gandhiji. The main resolution on the fundamentals of the Congress policy read:

> India is the land of many religions and many races and must remain so. Nevertheless, India has been and is a country with a fundamental unity and the aim of the Congress has been to develop this great country as a whole as a democratic secular State where all citizens enjoy full rights and are equally entitled to the protection of the State, irrespective of the religion to which they belong. . . .
>
> The Congress wants to assure the minorities in India that it will continue to protect, to the best of its ability, their citizen rights against aggression. The Central Government as well as the Provincial Governments must accordingly make every effort to create conditions wherein all minorities and all citizens have security and opportunity for progress. . . .

Another resolution expressed concern at the growth of private armies. It named Muslim National Guards, Rashtriya Swayam-sevak

Sangh, Akali volunteers, and such other organisations as actual and potential culprits under that category—"a menace to the hard-won freedom of the country" — and appealed to them to discontinue such activities and asked the Central and Provincial Governments to take necessary steps in that behalf.

Still another resolution called upon the Government and the people so to act as to enable all the Muslim evacuees, who had left their homes under pressure, to return and to resume their original avocations:

> The tragic events that have taken place in recent months in the Punjab and elsewhere have resulted in vast migrations of population. . . . The A.-I.C.C. . . is of opinion that these migrations should be discouraged and conditions should be created both in the Indian Union and in Pakistan for minorities to live in peace and security. If such conditions are created, the desire to migrate to another part of the country will disappear. In the opinion of the Committee it is wrong to coerce Hindu and Sikh inhabitants of Pakistan into leaving their homes and migrating to the Indian Union, and Muslims of the Indian Union into migrating to Pakistan.
>
> While it is impossible to undo all that has been done, every effort should be made to enable the evacuees and refugees from either Dominion ultimately to return to their homes and to their original occupations under conditions of safety and security. Those who have not left their homes already should be encouraged to stay there unless they themselves desire to migrate, in which case facilities for migrating should be made available. It is the duty of the Central Government of the Indian Union and the Government of Pakistan to negotiate on this basis and to create conditions which would enable the evacuees and refugees to return with safety.

The real test, Gandhiji declared at his prayer meeting on the evening of the 18th November, was that the columns that were marching on foot towards Pakistan should feel such change in the atmosphere as to make them turn towards their homes. Some individuals from the column that was moving from the Gurgaon district were already turning homeward. If the people acted correctly, the whole column would follow suit.

An ominous portent was a report which Gandhiji had received that the members of the All-India Congress Committee, who had voted for the resolutions, were not all sincere in their profession. In a letter to me he wrote: "I see, my battle has to be fought and won in Delhi itself. There is a lot for me to do here. . . . Six resolutions of

the All-India Congress Committee this time were practically mine. . . . It now remains to be seen how they are implemented."[7]

Before dispersing, the All-India Congress Committee accepted the resignation of Acharya Kripalani, the Congress President. He had not been able to hit it off with his Congress colleagues in the Government since he had become President. His continuing as Congress President, in the circumstances, he felt, could only make for disharmony and lack of cooperation between the Congress executive and the Congress Government at the Centre; and it was best for him to step aside. Gandhiji endorsed his decision.

Who should succeed Acharya Kripalani? Almost all the top-ranking leaders were in the Government and the future relation between the Congress executive and the Government at the Centre had not yet been clearly defined. Someone asked Gandhiji whether in the circumstance he would not himself take charge of the Congress. He replied that he was not sure whether his drastic remedies would appeal to anyone. His yoke might prove too heavy. Gandhiji would have liked a Congress Socialist to be the President as there was no outstanding Congress leader outside the Government to take charge and he did not want the Congress to be turned into a mere rubber-stamp of the Government in power. He suggested the name of Acharya Narendra Deva. But it was not acceptable to the Congress leaders. They decided in favour of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who relieved himself of the portfolio of Food and Agriculture in the Central Cabinet to become the President of the Congress.

3

Hardly had the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee on the refugee question been passed when news began to arrive that it was being reduced to a dead-letter in the capital itself.

A Muslim shop in Chandni Chowk had temporarily been allotted to a non-Muslim refugee on the condition that when the owner returned, he would have to vacate. The original owner turned up. But when the police party went to the occupant and demanded possession of it, they found a crowd of nearly 2,000 gathered menacingly in front of the shop, demonstrating against the eviction of the temporary occupant. They dispersed only after the police had fired a few rounds in the air. One passer-by was stabbed.

An ingenious technique was employed in another part of the city. Sikhs, often the worse for drink, paraded through Muslim quarters. They danced with naked swords, and created rowdy scenes to terrorise the Muslim residents into vacating their houses to make room for the Hindus and Sikhs.

A few days later the peace of Delhi was again disturbed. Some Hindu and Sikh refugees went out to an empty Muslim house and tried forcibly to occupy it. A scuffle ensued. In the course of it some were injured. A rumour was spread that four Sikhs had been killed. Retribution followed. Several persons were stabbed. As a result curfew had again to be enforced in several parts of the city.

"What is the use of my getting the Congress or the A.-I.C.C. to pass certain resolutions if they are to be rendered nugatory in action?" Gandhiji sadly remarked to Rajaji. He would rather, he said, that his eyes were closed in death than that he should be a living witness to what was going on around him.

On the 2nd December, on receiving news that the Hindus of Panipat had begun to take forcible possession of the Muslim houses, he again went there. The number of Hindu and Sikh refugees from the West Punjab had swelled to 28,000. They were shouting slogans demanding eviction of the Muslims from East Punjab. The Muslims asked to be evacuated to Pakistan.

They said that though, when he last visited them, they had said they would not go, the situation had since deteriorated. Neither their life nor honour, not to speak of their property, was safe. How could they stay in the circumstances? Gandhiji told them that they were under no compulsion to leave. They should place their grievances before the authorities. He would see to it that they got proper redress. But their mind was made up.

What could have brought about this deterioration since his last visit? On inquiry Gandhiji learnt that the influx of a large number of Hindu and Sikh refugees from the West Punjab and the Frontier Province had made the difference. On his return journey, he took along with him their spokesman and told him that he should ask the Hindu and Sikh refugees to persuade the Muslims not to leave their homes and set at rest all their fears. That would be real victory for Panipat, famed for its three battles which thrice had turned the tide of Indian history.

But it was too late. The Muslims said they would far rather be evacuated to Pakistan. Ultimately they all went and to Gandhiji's sorrow the "fourth battle of Panipat", as he very aptly put it, was lost.

All this made Gandhiji very sad, so much so that he said he sometimes felt that he had become a useless burden on earth. India had now its army, a navy in the making and an air force. And these were being developed still further. But his conviction remained unaltered, reiterated Gandhiji,that unless India developed her non-violent strength she had "gained nothing for herself or for the world". To the very last he clung to the hope that India would one day realise his ideal of the non-violence of the brave and blaze the trail for all humanity.

Analysing the root cause of India's failure to live up to the ideal of Ahimsa after independence, Gandhiji wrote in a letter to a Swiss Pacifist friend, Madame Edmond Privat, that it was the same as had been responsible for the failure of Christianity in the West, viz. to confuse passivity with non-violence:

> Europe mistook the bold and brave resistance, full of wisdom, by Jesus of Nazareth for passive resistance, as if it was of the weak. As I read the New Testament for the first time, I detected no passivity, no weakness about Jesus as depicted in the four gospels, and the meaning became clearer to me when I read Tolstoy's *Harmony of the Gospels* and his other kindred writings. Has not the West paid heavily in regarding Jesus as a Passive Resister? Christendom has been responsible for the wars which put to shame even those described in the Old Testament and other records, historical or semi-historical.[8]

While India had undoubtedly obtained her political freedom through "passive resistance", he continued, they were daily paying a heavy price for the unconscious mistake they had made or rather "I made" in mistaking "passive resistance" for "non-violent resistance."

> Had I not made the mistake, we would have been spared the humiliating spectacle of weak brother killing his weak brother thoughtlessly and inhumanly. I am only hoping and praying and I want all the friends here and in other parts of the world to hope and pray with me that this blood-bath will soon end and out of that, perhaps, inevitable butchery, will rise a new and robust India—not warlike, basely imitating the West in all its hideousness, but a new India learning the best that the West has to give and becoming the hope not only of Asia and Africa, but the whole of the aching world.

"I must confess," he concluded, "this is hoping against hope, for we are today swearing by the military and all that naked physical force implies. Our statesmen have for over two generations declaimed against the heavy expenditure on armaments under the British regime, but now that freedom from political serfdom has come, our military expenditure has increased and still threatens to increase and of this we are proud! There is not a voice raised against it in our legislative chambers. In spite, however, of the madness and the vain imitation of the tinsel of the West, the hope lingers in me and in many others that India shall survive this death-dance and occupy the moral height that should belong to her after the training, however imperfect, in non-violence for an unbroken period of thirty-two years since 1915."

* * *

General K.M. Cariappa of the Indian Army in one of his utterances in England had allowed himself to say that non-violence was of no use under the existing circumstances in India; only a strong army could make India one of the greatest nations in the world.

Gandhiji joined issue with him in *Harijan*: "Generals greater than General Cariappa have been wise and humble enough frankly to make the admission that they can have no right to speak of the possibilities of the great force of Ahimsa. I make bold to say that in this age of the atom bomb, unadulterated non-violence is the only force that can confound all the tricks put together of violence. We are witnessing the tragic insolvency of military science and practice in its own home. Should a bankrupt, who has been (ruined) by the gamble in the share-market, sing the praise of that particular form of gambling?"[9]

This in army language, as the General afterwards put it, was "a rocket"! But he took it sportingly. On his return to India he called on Gandhiji in the first week of December, on the eve of taking over the command of the Eastern Army. This was their first meeting. It was Gandhiji's day of silence. He was busy with his Charkha. Declining to take his seat on a chair that Gandhiji had offered him, the General respectfully sat on the floor.

"I have come here to receive your blessings . . ." he said to Gandhiji.

Gandhiji scribbled on a piece of paper: "You know something of my having written in my paper about your statement on non-violence in London last month?"

The General smiled and said that he had seen it and had felt greatly honoured that the Mahatma should have taken the trouble to notice at length the views of a person like him whom he had never met.

Coming to the point at issue, he said: "We soldiers are a very much maligned community. . . . Even you think that we are a very violent tribe. But we are not. . . . Of all the peoples in this world, the one community which dislikes wars is the soldier community. It is not because of the dangers and horrors in the battlefield but because of the knowledge we have of the utter futility of wars to settle international disputes. We feel one war merely leads to another. History has taught us this."

This testimony as to the utter futility of war as a means for settling international disputes from such an eminent professional soldier came to Gandhiji as an agreeable surprise. It made the search for an effective moral substitute for war common ground between them. This was half the battle won.

The General continued: "In a democratic country soldiers do not initiate wars. . . . Governments, when they have failed to get a satisfactory solution to international problems, declare wars. . . . We

merely carry out the orders of the Government and therefore. . . of the people. . . . If a people in a democracy do not like wars they should not blame us . . . but . . . the Government they have put in power. . . . It is quite simple for them, if they are not satisfied with the Government, to change the Government and put another in its place which will not resort to wars. . . . So you see we are the innocent party. . . . Why blame us?"

Gandhiji signalled to him to return the slip of paper he had given him. On it he again wrote: "When we meet again . . . I would like further to discuss this subject with you."

Two days later they again met. "He was looking very cheerful," the General recalls. "I was in uniform on this occasion. I stood in front of him and saluted him."

Gandhiji turned to him and said smilingly: "I see you have again removed your shoes outside. You had done it when you came two days ago also."

With deep reverence the General replied: "It is but proper that I should do so when coming to see a godly man like you."

Resuming their talk on non-violence, the General said: "I have come . . . to tell you that we soldiers practise every bit of the ideologies which you practise . . . i.e. love and loyalty to mankind, discipline, selflessness in the service of our country, dignity of labour and non-violence. . . . If we have to have an army at all . . . it must be a good one. . . . I would . . . like to remind them in my own way of the need for and the value of non-violence. I cannot possibly do my duty well by the country if I concentrate only on telling the troops of non-violence all the time, subordinating their main task of preparing themselves efficiently to be good soldiers. So I ask you, please, to give me the 'Child's Guide to Knowledge'. . . . Tell me, please, how I can put this over, i.e. the spirit of non-violence to the troops . . . without endangering their sense of duty to train themselves well professionally as soldiers. I am a child in this matter. I want your guidance."

Gandhiji laughed. He was still at his Charkha. He paused, looked at the General and said: "Yes . . . you are all children; I am a child too, but I happen to be a bigger child than you because I have given more thought to this question than you all have. You have asked me to tell you in a tangible and concrete form how you can put over to the troops you command the need for non-violence."

Half closing his eyes, he stretched his right arm out to emphasise his words and added: "I am still groping in the dark for the answer. I will find it and I will give it to you some day."

He then went on to recount how even Lord Wavell and Lord Mountbatten, both veteran professional soldiers, had expressed their implicit faith in the value of non-violence. "Lord Wavell was very impressed with the non-violent way in which the commun altroubles

between Hindus and Muslims have been tackled by us. They both hope that our ideologies of non-violence and pacifism would be understood by the peoples of the world and practised by all in solving international disputes." Of course, like the General, they had at the same time said that one should always be prepared for self-defence.

At parting Gandhiji repeated: "I will think about this seriously in the next few days and will let you know about it soon. However, I would like to see you more often so that we may further discuss this important subject more. . . . I have always had the greatest admiration for the discipline in the army and also for the importance you army people pay to sanitation and hygiene. I tell my people in my talks to them to copy the army in these respects."

The General met Gandhiji for the last time on the 18th January, 1948. He had come to Delhi to take over charge of the Western Command, then known as D.E.P. (Delhi and East Punjab Command) which had the responsibility of conducting the operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

"I am going to Kashmir in a few days' time," he said.

"I hope you will succeed in solving the Kashmir problem non-violently," Gandhiji replied. "Come and see me after your return from Kashmir."

The General had been keenly looking forward to receiving in due course the "Child's Guide to Knowledge". It was a fascinating prospect, the General of India's non-violent struggle for freedom initiating the General of the Indian army in the non-violent techniques and the two working together to discover and experiment with an effective substitute for war, which they agreed settled nothing. Towards that object Gandhiji had collaborated with Badshah Khan and the fighting Pathans of the Frontier Province and with what startling success, too! He held very definite views on the role of the army in a State aspiring to realise the non-violent ideal and how its strength and effectiveness could be increased by adopting the non-violent techniques. But Providence had decreed otherwise. The General returned from Kashmir on the afternoon of 30th January, 1948, to see the remains of him at Rajghat the next day.

4

In the second week of December, 1947, Gandhiji was having an argument with Shaheed Suhrawardy on the question of the recovery of abducted women from the West Punjab. In the course of it, he said: "You must know that the people here and even in a greater measure the members of the Union Government do not have that trust in you that I have. They tell me that you are fooling me, that in

Calcutta you hung on my words because the Muslims were in peril but here things are different and so are you. If you wish to remove their distrust and suspicion, you must have the courage plainly to tell Jinnah and Liaquat Ali that they must adopt a uniform policy with the Indian Union in regard to the recovery of the abducted women and other matters pertaining to the minorities. Similarly, you must ascertain the truth about what is said to be happening in Karachi and ask Jinnah how it comports with his declaration that the minorities in Pakistan would be fully protected. And if you cut no ice with them, you must, as a Muslim and an Indian national, issue a statement disapproving of Pakistan's policy in unequivocal terms. Thereby you will serve both India and Pakistan."

This was the theme of many a discussion that Gandhiji had with Shaheed and with the local Muslims. In the grim battle that the Indian Union was fighting against the forces of communal fanaticism to make India safe for the minorities and insure to the minorities their full rights as Indian nationals, they must courageously come out on the side of right and justice and speak out their mind to Jinnah and Pakistan.

The talk with Shaheed was still in progress when a group of local Muslims came. Gandhiji repeated to them this advice. They must set forth their views in a public statement if they felt that the minorities in Pakistan were not getting a fair deal and boldly and unequivocally say that this was a disgrace to Pakistan and a stigma on Islam. The Muslim friends admitted that Pakistan's treatment of the minorities was oppressive, unethical and un-Islamic; they thoroughly disapproved of it. They further said that it was in Pakistan's hands to insure the safety of the Indian Muslims by according proper treatment to the minorities in Pakistan. They promised to Gandhiji that all this would be embodied in a statement they would issue.

At about the same time, a deputation of four U.P. Muslims that had gone to West Punjab on a peace mission, submitted a report to Gandhiji on their return. In it they expressed the view that Hindus could now return to Lahore and live there in safety. The Sikhs, however, would have to bide their time. They went on to say: "The members of the U.P. Peace Mission assure their non-Muslim brethren that they would accompany those who wish to return to their homes and help to rehabilitate them. They would protect them with their lives and will not leave them till they feel safe."

This was a step in the right direction. But such was the distrust and bitterness in the people's mind that the report evoked a series of angry protests from the refugees. Experiences of the refugees who had attempted to return to the West Punjab were cited. These, it was pointed out, were wholly opposed to the text and tenor of the report. Gandhiji was warned not to be taken in by "sweet talk by Muslim

leaders in Pakistan". The invitation to Hindus to return to Lahore and to resume their business, to the exclusion of the Sikhs, was characterised as a "cunning move . . . to create a rift between the Hindus and Sikhs."

Gandhiji pleaded with the sceptics. Even if the facts as stated were correct, they did not necessarily vitiate what the Muslim friends had said. If the offer was intended to divide the Hindus from the Sikhs, it was certainly a vicious move. True, the offer could be so interpreted. But they must not forget that the U.P. friends had emphatically repudiated that sinister interpretation. "They have not only their own reputation to maintain but also of those in the Union whom they represent, and of the Pakistan authorities who gave them the assurance. Let me add, too, that . . . they are not idle; they are prosecuting their peace mission."[10]

Finally, he told the people, they must make allowances for the unfortunate realities on both sides. "It is not to be denied that there is stronger prejudice in Pakistan against the Sikhs." Thus regarded, there was nothing wrong in the effort of the U. P. friends "to make the passage smooth for recross over." In the crisis through which they were passing, they could not afford to be hyper-suspicious or hyper-sensitive. "Disbelief is a treacherous mate. . . . For my part . . . I have trusted all my life with my eyes open. . . . Trust begets trust. It gives you strength to combat treachery. If there is to be return on either side by the evacuees to their homes, it will be only by means I have suggested and am pursuing."[11]

It was characteristic of Gandhiji that while he strove with the people with all his strength not to suspect the *bona fides* of those who were trying to bridge the gulf between the two Dominions, he made no attempt to conceal from all concerned that he was not satisfied that the conditions were yet ripe for the return of Hindu and Sikh refugees to their original homes. He would himself tell them, he said, when they were. This much, however, he could say straight away: There could be no peace without the refugees returning to their homes. He could never be reconciled to the proposition of a permanent exchange of populations.[12]

5

The dilemma that had taken Charu Chowdhury and myself to Calcutta in the month of August had remained unresolved. There had been no opportunity to consult Gandhiji, then fasting. We, however, had hoped that he would return to Noakhali later and guide us. That was not to be.

On the 17th September, in a letter to me from Delhi, he wrote:

"My coming to Noakhali is uncertain. The work here is most difficult. But it is only in the midst of difficulties that one is really tested."

The letter concluded: "It is always well with those who put themselves completely in God's hands. Let it be as He wills."

A letter from my sister, Sushila, in the same envelope read: "Bapu is going to have a hard time of it here. . . . Yesterday he was saying that he would not be surprised if some of us might have to go the way of the leaders of the French Revolution. . . . One smells disaster in the air. . . . The outburst of the refugee fury the other day at the prayer meeting was an eye-opener. . . . The exchange of populations is actually taking place however much we may dislike it. It will need the strength of a Titan to save the Indian Muslims from the consequence of its impact. . . . Will there be a mass exodus of Hindus from East Pakistan after the manner of West Pakistan? Bapu says it would be a catastrophe. He is right. But people here say, right or wrong, good or bad, it is inevitable. There is no other course open to the Hindus. What will be the end of all this? War between the two Dominions and the extinction of our hard-won independence? God forbid."

A renewed rush of refugees from East Bengal had, as a matter of fact, already commenced. "There is a fresh exodus of Hindus from East Bengal," ran a letter from Gandhiji to me dated the 6th October. "What does it portend? I have taken it that Noakhali would not be re-enacted in the Dacca area (from where the exodus was taking place). It is said that the Muslims are not allowing the Hindus to celebrate their festivals with music. Among the Muslims there are said to be two groups. One group maintains that the Hindus have every right to do so. The others say, they won't allow it. There is a panic among the Hindus as a result. Write to me in detail after full inquiry."

In a previous letter he had asked me whether I could not be spared from Noakhali. I had replied that it was all a matter of comparative need. If he needed me at Delhi, I could come. He wrote back: "Of course I need you here. . . . There is so much to do. Besides I have of late resumed active editorship of *Harijan*. . . . That makes the need for you to be here all the greater. Still I give the first priority to Noakhali. While you are all there, I can feel at peace with myself. Supposing you all were to come away from Noakhali, I would then feel compelled to give up everything else and go there, even all by myself, to 'do or die'."

After partition there had been an upsurge of Muslim goodwill in Noakhali towards the Hindus. During a tour of the affected parts, Satish Das Gupta found a distinct note of cordiality in the attitude of the politically-minded Muslims. There was warm welcome in place of cold hostility. In several places they asked for centres to be opened to introduce spinning and other constructive activities among the

Muslims. At places, awakened Muslim opinion had begun to assert itself. In the village next to mine, some Muslim urchins catching hold of a Hindu boy performed a mimic conversion by forcing what was supposed to be cow's blood down his throat. For this cruel prank, the Muslim elders, meeting in a *panchayat*, awarded the offenders by way of punishment 25 and 14 cuts with a cane respectively, and a fine of rupees five, to be paid as compensation to the aggrieved party. As a mark of repentance and guarantee of future good behaviour, according to the local tradition, the offenders were besides publicly to rub their nose on the ground. The aggrieved party declined to accept the compensation money, saying that the insult to their religion could be wiped off not by money but by genuine repentance on the part of the offenders. They, therefore, suggested that the fine be dropped. But the Muslim elders would not consent. In the end, with both parties' concurrence, the fine was utilised to provide powder milk to sick Muslim orphans of the locality.

The new District Magistrate (McInerny's successor, a Muslim) had made a strong protest to Dacca against the granting of bail to notorious offenders. Sessions Judge of Noakhali, it seems, had acted without his knowledge. The District Magistrate was trying to get the bails cancelled. He had also asked for funds for the payment of the balance of relief grants, already sanctioned, to the victims of disturbances. He promised that he would visit the site belonging to the Hindus, which during the riots the Muslims of Shahpur had seized and upon which they had illegally built a mosque, and set the matter right.

All cases relating to the disturbances were to be referred to a special magistrate with power to reopen the more serious ones. But there was no-one properly to represent the victims and, owing to lack of adequate backing and legal assistance, there was every possibility of their case going by default. This was bound still further to depress the people's shattered morale.

Besides, the law and order machinery was unchanged. To the partisan behaviour of the police and of other district officials was added the pressure by the influential local Muslims. All this threatened to render nugatory the goodwill policy of which the Chief Minister of East Bengal had assured us at Dacca (see page 427).

I had brought these facts to the notice of the Chief Minister of East Bengal and sent copies of my correspondence in that regard to Gandhiji. I also drew Gandhiji's attention to a statement by the East Bengal Chief Minister in which he had said that even cultivation of public opinion in favour of a reunion with India would be treated as treason against the State: "This means that unless we can accept partition as unreservedly as once you accepted the British Empire, even to the length of teaching your children to sing 'God save the

King' in the approved English tune, we cannot stay in Pakistan without being guilty of 'disloyalty' to the State. How can then those who cannot in all conscience accept partition as something good or irrevocable for all time have any place in Pakistan?

"Feverish preparations are going on to re-enact Kashmir on a small scale in Tripura State. Pakistan officials are deeply involved in it. Some of them are even said to be carrying on a 'palace intrigue' in Tripura State to this end. Three or four days ago, speeches were delivered at a public meeting in Comilla by Muslims exhorting the people to launch an action against Tripura authorities. Hindu subjects of Pakistan were challenged to prove their 'loyalty' by joining in that meritorious action for the extension of Pakistan's boundaries. What should be the attitude of the Hindus? What should the Hindu refugees from Noakhali, domiciled in Agartala (capital of Tripura) do? What advice should we give to those who seek our counsel?

"In one sense, however, the situation in Noakhali may now be said to be normal. The policy of the Government is no more to harass or to persecute the Hindus. But the complexion of the *administration* is communal and their behaviour openly partisan. Discrimination and a steady squeeze in the name of the 'Islamic State' are going on, and corruption, inefficiency and lack of discipline in all branches of administration are endemic. Before the partition the Central Government exercised, at least in name, some check. Now even that is gone. For the rest, unless war actually breaks out between the two Dominions, there is no imminent danger of any large scale disturbance taking place. In other words, peace in East Bengal henceforth will depend more on the overall situation *vis-a-vis* the two Dominions than on purely local conditions. . . . This does not mean that we can close down our camps in Noakhali, but perhaps the whole question of the nature and scope of our activity here and of the personnel will have to be re-examined and our policy in respect of it revised.

"From the reports that have appeared in the Press, it seems, we narrowly escaped being made prisoners of war (as a result of outbreak of hostilities between the two Dominions on the Kashmir issue, which seemed at that time imminent).

"Unless something untoward happens in the meantime I, during the next three or four weeks, shall most probably be able to disengage myself from here for a while and come to Delhi. When last I met our new District Magistrate, he told me that I could now take a short leave from Noakhali and see for myself— and let them see— how they handled the situation by themselves."

To this Gandhiji sent a full and detailed reply:

"I did receive copies of your correspondence with Nazimuddin. . . . I liked the whole of it. Here are replies to your questions:

"As to his statement on Pakistan, in my opinion, Khwaja Saheb has overshot the mark. I can understand their objecting to propaganda in favour of reunion backed by action. But how can they ban the holding or the propagation even of *views* contrary to the Pakistan Government's present policy, or the cultivation of public opinion in favour of those views? You should see Khwaja Saheb personally or write to him to get the issue clarified. No-one may try to coerce the Pakistan Government but surely everyone has a right to bring home to the Muslims the error of what has taken place and to convert them to one's view if possible. Send me the draft of your letter to Khwaja Saheb before posting.

"You have referred to my attitude in regard to the British Empire. Let me tell you, I derived no little strength from my implicit loyalty to the British Empire in thought, word and deed. I am doing exactly the same in regard to Pakistan.

"What is happening in Tripura is very wrong. It is naked coercion. But if the people of Tripura have no grit, if they are stupid or if the State administration is rotten to the core, what can one do? I do not think you can do anything in this matter. . . . Of course, you can help with advice. If by coming into personal contact with the State officials you could get them to behave as *men*, it would be a great thing.

"I cannot regard the Noakhali situation as 'normal' in any sense so long as the corruption is not rooted out. Death at a stroke is better than death by inches.

"On the surface there is peace *here*. But so long as hearts are not united it is like a castle built upon sand. You are perfectly right that so long as things on the top do not come right *here* there will be no real improvement *there*.

"The story about that little boy is very touching. The decision about the use of the fine money was very appropriate. The action taken by the local Muslims does them credit. . . .

"I have already written to you that you should come whenever the situation and your work there permit."

Gandhiji's letter reflected his experience in the capital where the Union Government's declared policy was being rendered nugatory in action by subordinate officials. We had no clear idea of this at that time. We failed to perceive what he so clearly saw.

This letter of Gandhiji, however, failed to reach me at the time. I learnt its contents only after rejoining Gandhiji in the middle of December.

Before I left Noakhali, we, with the coöperation of the District Magistrate, were able to persuade the Muslims at Shahpur to restore the aforementioned site of the mosque. With their own hands they pulled down the structure and returned the dismantled corrugated

iron sheets to the lawful owners from whose house they had been looted. In a signed statement they described the act as "a gesture of goodwill towards our Hindu brethren and a step towards their rehabilitation."

The decision was not taken by the local Muslims without a strenuous searching of hearts. Even at the eleventh hour some of them talked about calling a joint meeting of local Hindus and Muslims to arrive at a "compromise". I told them that any talk of "compromise" in a question involving redress of a patent wrong, as in the present case, was out of place. Even if the minority community had made no demand for it, the majority community was in honour bound to give full redress. Physical restitution was nothing worth unless it symbolised a change of heart and carried with it their goodwill. They saw my point and dropped the "compromise" talk. They said they wanted to make the restitution from their heart, and with Bismillah (in the name of Allah) on their lips, demolished the mosque which they had illegally erected.

Regarded in the perspective of the situation as a whole this was a trifle "light as air" but considering the sentiment that the Muslims attach to the demolition of a mosque once it has, rightly or wrongly, been erected, Gandhiji hailed it as a portent betokening a change of heart at least in one part of Pakistan: "If all in India and Pakistan follow the example the shape of things will be changed in no time."[13]

* * *

The Peace Committee that Gandhiji had left behind in Bihar continued its good work with the full cooperation of the authorities. The members of his party served as a link between the people and the Government. They carried on strenuous propaganda in pursuance of Gandhiji's mission, brought the difficulties of the refugees, public workers and local officials to the attention of the authorities and helped them with unofficial advice on matters of policy and of administration in connection with rehabilitation.

It gladdened Gandhiji's heart when General Shah Nawaz of the Indian National Army, who was working in Massaurhi (Bihar), in reply to an invitation from Delhi to go to the Punjab, which was burning, wired back: "Regret unable come. Bapu says Massaurhi my Red Fort." The Red Fort was the symbol of the Indian National Army's objective during their fight against the British under Netaji Subhas Bose.

On receiving the news that his fiancee had sustained grave injuries in a serious accident, another worker sought Gandhiji's permission to go to see her for a few days. Back came Gandhiji's reply that he could go if he felt he must. The worker wrote back that there was no "must" for a soldier save his duty. It brought from Gandhiji a most

affectionate letter praising his attempt at self-discipline and saying that if he really turned himself into a soldier for whom there was no "must" apart from his duty, he would achieve great things. That was how he made heroes out of clay. The alchemy of his boundless affection made his yoke mild and easy to bear, and the cultivation of self-discipline a joy instead of a burden.

Even more cheering was a report by a Muslim member of the Peace Committee that Gandhiji received in the beginning of January, 1948. Suraiya had been the worst affected village in the Sadar subdivision of Gaya district during the Bihar disturbances. About 100 refugees from there were in the Gaya camp. Though their houses were not yet ready for habitation, he took them to the village. "We were welcomed with garlands of flowers by the Hindus of the locality. Hindu men and women respectively embraced Muslim men and women. For two days they fed them at their own expense. They made room for them in their homes and they will live there till their own are ready. I visited them again after a number of days. . . . The Hindus were serving them in all possible ways."

Siswar village was hardly less desolate. Here, too, the inhabitants had gone back. The Hindus invited them to stay in the local school till their own houses were ready. The Khizarsarai Thana Congress Committee office was shifted from a place close by to Siswar and it was decided that it should remain there till the houses of the Muslims were ready. A Peace Committee was formed "and the same young man is its head who took the vow to defend Muslims with his life under the big banyan tree when you (Gandhiji) visited the place."

In Jehanabad, the atmosphere became so cordial that when estimates were being prepared for repairs of the damage done, the Muslims requested the Hindus to represent their case to the authorities, and keen, alert trustees, jealous of their trust, the Hindus proved to be.

Tilhara had been the scene of terrible brutalities during the disturbances. One of Gandhiji's workers, who was sent there, found, to his joy, that the two Muslims, who had come back, were living there in peace. One of them, an old man, was being fed by the Hindus. "He said, soon his sons and daughters would also return. In Nagarnausa also a few Muslim men and a few widows were living in perfect peace." And Nagarnausa was the place where nearly one hundred Hindus had been killed by police firing during the disturbances.

A few months ago when Gandhiji had asked the Hindus to admit their Muslim brothers and sisters into their own homes if the latter's houses could not be rebuilt before the rains came, his counsel was hardly believed to be practical. But the unbelievable had come to pass and once again Gandhiji's faith in the fundamental goodness of the human heart was vindicated.

6

An extremely tense situation developed in the Indian Union towards the close of 1947 and the beginning of 1948, when to the unresolved Kashmir question was added the mounting crisis in Hyderabad.

Following upon the accession of the bulk of the States to the Indian Union, the States Ministry under Sardar Patel and his able secretary V. P. Menon had proceeded rapidly with the work of integration of the States with the Indian territory. The first step in this direction was the merger into surrounding Provinces of tiny States which on account of their size were ill-fitted to sustain a costly separate administration of their own. The next step was the creation, under the aegis of the Government of India, of Unions of States, so as to form viable units among the neighbours having geographical contiguity and other affinities.

In bringing about mergers, the individual rulers were permitted to retain their titles and dignities, their residences and private fortunes and were assigned a fixed civil list. But the Government of India made it quite clear that the future set up of the States was subject to an essential condition that full power must be transferred by the rulers to the people. "They (the Government of India) have firmly declined to be party to any arrangements relating to the States unless they expressly provide for the establishment of responsible Government."

But, in the midst of these revolutionary changes that were changing the very face of India, the Nizam of Hyderabad, in open disregard of the wishes of the overwhelming majority of his subjects, obstinately refused either to accede to the Indian Union or to grant immediate responsible Government. He stuck to the unrealistic and historically preposterous position that "Hyderabad is a country and is organised as a country." On historical as well as on political grounds the Government of India rejected the contention that Hyderabad was and would remain independent.

As late as 12th August, 1947, Mountbatten had secured for the Nizam a special extension of two months after the independence day, during which to reach an agreement with the Indian Union on the issue of accession. But while outwardly the Nizam professed his intention to come to an agreement with the Indian Union on special terms and carried on negotiations for the same, secretly, the Union Government learnt, his Government was trying to obtain arms from Czechoslovakia. At the same time Ittehad-ul-Mussalmin, a Muslim militant organisation, and its para-military wing the Razakars, became extremely

active. They began to terrorise the Hindu population of the State and to indulge in highly provocative anti-Indian activities to put pressure upon the Nizam not to come to any agreement with the Government of India.

Reports from several independent sources had reached Gandhiji about these activities and secret preparations. "The Government of India are very perturbed by this development," a friend who was in the know of things reported to Gandhiji. "The Union Government are keeping a watchful eye on the situation. They are convinced that sooner or later they would be forced to take action against Hyderabad." Pat came Gandhiji's reply: "Would it be wisdom in that case to allow them to complete their preparations?"

After prolonged negotiations between the Hyderabad delegation and the Government of India, a draft standstill agreement was at last prepared on the 22nd October. Three days later the Nizam's executive council with a formal vote of six *versus* three advised the Nizam to accept it. The Nizam's delegation was to have left for Delhi the next morning with the final agreement but surprisingly, at the last minute, the Nizam put off affixing his signature to the document without any explanation. Early next morning, an Ittehad crowd, estimated to be twenty thousand strong, surrounded the houses occupied by the delegation and prevented it from leaving for Delhi. This came within 24 hours of India Government's acceptance of Kashmir's accession and the fly-in of Indian troops. The synchronisation of the events was significant.

On the 27th October, the Nizam saw the delegation and told them that he was in complete agreement with the views of his Council. He would send for Qasim Razvi, the head of the Ittehad, and "force" (*sic*) him to accept the Council's decision. But in the meeting that followed, it was Razvi who dominated the Nizam. He boasted that he would force the Union Government, while they were preoccupied with the trouble in Kashmir, to accept the terms of the original draft. As a result, the Nizam's delegation, including his Prime Minister, resigned. The Nizam informed the Government of India that the old delegation had been dissolved and another, formed from the ranks of the dissenting members in his Council, would be sent to continue the negotiations. At the same time he threatened that if the negotiations with the Union Government failed, he would negotiate and conclude an agreement with Pakistan immediately. It transpired that this was consequent upon the return of two of the emissaries he had sent to Karachi and as a result presumably of the message that they had brought with them.

The new delegation on its arrival in Delhi adopted the *non-possumus* line that Hyderabad would prefer to remain an independent sovereign State "in close association with the two Dominions". It

was made clear to them that the Government of India still stood by the draft agreement accepted by the Nizam's previous delegation, the Nizam's Council, and the Nizam himself. If the Nizam continued to repudiate his own decision, the responsibility of the consequences would be his. But it was evident that the delegation were out to take advantage of India's preoccupation with Kashmir. Recorded Mountbatten's Press Attache in his diary: "The Nizam of Hyderabad is undoubtedly playing for time to see how Kashmir develops before taking a final decision. . . . In the attempt he has carried on what can only be described as Ruritanian negotiations. The Ittehad which he originally encouraged has now become a veritable Frankenstein. . . ."[14]

After some further tortuous diplomatic manoeuvring, the Nizam ultimately signed a standstill agreement on the 29th November for one year during which a permanent settlement would be arrived at.

Three days before the signing of the standstill agreement, Qasim Razvi, who was in Delhi during the negotiations, saw Gandhiji. What occurred during the interview is best told in Gandhiji's own words:

Gandhiji to Qasim Razvi 26th November, 1947

> I was glad that we met. Your talk surprised me. It was difficult to believe it. I had asked you if I could send you the papers that had come to me about you and Hyderabad Muslims. I have got many complaints but the three that I enclose are enough for the purpose.

The meeting apparently had little effect on the swash-buckling Razakar chief. His recklessness grew. Later he pompously declared that he would not rest till he had established himself in the Red Fort in Delhi. He got established there eight months later, after the Union Government's "police action" against Hyderabad—not as conqueror but prisoner.

* * *

The situation in Sind continued steadily to deteriorate. There was a riot in Hyderabad (Sind) in the last week of October. Another followed on the 17th December. In Hyderabad city, the largest educational centre in the Province, almost all the educational institutions from colleges to primary schools were requisitioned for the Muslim refugees. This action adversely affected about 25,000 non-Muslims. Even places of worship were forcibly turned into refugee camps. In one of the college buildings, in which refugees were accommodated, they tore books in the library, destroyed college records, smashed the apparatus in the laboratories and looted the principal's bungalow. Not that the Government could not have found alternative accommodation for them elsewhere but it simply did not care. Obstacles

were put in the way of sale, transfer or exchange of properties of non-Muslims on the ostensible ground that it was meant to discourage the exodus. Non-Muslim Government servants, who had sent away their families to the Indian Union, were threatened with dismissal unless they brought them back—obviously to serve as hostages for their loyalty.

Gandhiji warned the Pakistan authorities that consequences would be grave if it was made impossible for non-Muslims to remain in Sind as free citizens and they were forced to remain there as serfs and helots. The way to check the exodus was to regain the confidence of the minorities. The Pakistan Government must assure those who wished to go out of Sind that they were free to do so and provide them with all facilities for the purpose. If this were done, even those who had gone away might, with the return of normal conditions, wish to return to their homes. Compulsion would have just the contrary effect.

His advice fell on deaf ears. By 5th January, 1948, nearly 5 lakhs out of the total 14 lakhs of Hindus and Sikhs had left Sind. The Hindu population of Hyderabad (Sind) was reduced to one-third. Owing to the absence of Muslim refugees from the Punjab, hitherto there had been no large scale exodus of the Hindus from western and upper Sind. But by the second week of January, a convoy of two and a half lakhs of Muslim refugees, composed largely of persons who had been living in the camps in West Punjab and in consequence were fairly desperate, was reported to be on the move. They had already reached a place near Multan on the Sind-Punjab border. It was feared that as soon as they spilled over upper Sind, widespread disturbances would ensue. The prospect filled the people's mind with terror.

Disturbances broke out in Karachi on the 6th January. Sixty-four Sikhs, who had taken shelter in a Gurdwara, were done to death. A number of Hindus were killed on the premises of the Arya Girls School by the same mob. Simultaneously, systematic looting of Hindu houses broke out all over Karachi lasting from 2 p.m. to 7. p.m. A number of Hindus were again killed during this looting. The consensus of official opinion in Karachi was that nearly 70 per cent. of all Hindu houses, shops and other business premises were looted. In a large number of cases the victims were deprived of everything except the clothes they stood in.

The Sind Government on all accounts took "strong, effective and sincere" action to restore order. But the mischief was done. The clamour for evacuation continued. The feeling grew among the Hindus that non-Sindhi Muslims were determined to get rid of them sooner or later, so why not get out while the going was good?

The combined population of Hindus and Sikhs in Karachi had

stood at three and a half lakhs before partition. By 13th January, 1948, all Sikh residents had left and only about ninety thousand of Hindus remained.

The Pakistan Government maintained that they were trying to suppress the disturbance as fast as they could. But no improvement followed. Gandhiji said that if they were powerless to prevent the outbreak of violence, they should resign. "That might make things worse for a while but ultimately the things would improve." He had given identical advice to the Union Government, too (see page 452).

A Hindu leader from Sind described to Gandhiji the indignities that had forced the Sindhis to leave the Province. He asked for facilities for them to settle in Delhi.

"How could you come away leaving behind thousands of your poor brothers and sisters?" Gandhiji asked him. "How dared you desert those who trusted you, put their faith in you and shirked no sacrifices under your leadership in the Satyagraha struggle? This is not to condemn you but to bring home to you that both you and myself have been discovered in our nakedness. I pity you but I feel most unhappy with myself. If this is all that the front-rank leaders of Sind have to show after their thirty years of association with me, is it not time for me to ask myself, 'Where do I stand'?"

What was happening in Sind constituted such a flagrant breach of the very basis of partition that Gandhiji felt that both the non-Muslim leaders of Sind and the Union Government ought to make Sind the test case. He told the non-Muslim leaders who had come to him that they should return to Sind and resist to the end the oppression by non-violence and teach their people to do likewise rather than allow themselves to be done out of their birthright by a cowardly flight. But he did not wish to tax them beyond their capacity, he said. If they had not the requisite courage, or the strength, the next best thing to do was to settle with their families in a village in the Indian Union and serve the rural masses by engaging in constructive work instead of crowding into the cities to create fresh problems for themselves and for the Union.

The leaders having come away, Gandhiji felt that such Sindhis as wished to leave Sind should be helped to do so. This, with the help of the Indian shipping companies, the Union Government did to the best of its ability.

The exodus from East Bengal continued. To it was added still another from the State of Bahawalpur (Pakistan). It helped to swell the ranks of destitute refugees in Bombay, Kathiawad, the C.P., Delhi, and the U.P. on the one side, and Bengal, Assam, Bihar and Orissa on the other. The incoming refugees did not come with any friendly feelings towards those whose coreligionists across the border had dispossessed them of their hearth and home and driven them almost naked

and penniless from the land of their birth which they dearly loved. A menacing situation thus began to develop in India generally and in Delhi in particular.

In the face of this, the Congress High Command felt helpless. They could neither stem the exodus nor the rising tide of passions which the growing pressure and the worsening condition of the refugees had generated. This could result only in a catastrophe which threatened not only the values for which the Congress and the Indian Union stood but independence itself. And this Gandhiji had vowed to himself he would not live to see.

Part Five

JOURNEY'S END

CHAPTER XXI

TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS

1

India was now independent. But in Gandhiji's eyes political independence had little value if it did not herald the era of the common man. It would give him no satisfaction, he had often said, to substitute "King Stork for King Log". The struggle for political independence to him was not the end; it was only the first step towards the emancipation of the masses. He had been working to that end even when the country was in the wilderness.

"When would India be said to have attained complete independence?" Gandhiji was once asked during his last detention at Poona. He replied: "When the masses feel that they can improve their lot by their own effort and can shape their destiny the way they like." "Can full accession of power to the masses come through constitutional transfer of power; would not gradualism choke the upsurge of mass consciousness, continuity kill the prospect of a revolutionary change?" he was again asked. "Not if the transfer of power is peaceful," he replied, "and the masses hold on to non-violence to the last."

The communal blood-bath preceding and following independence had, however, queered the pitch. Seeing the goings-on around him, especially since independence, he sometimes asked himself whether independence had not come too early and too late. If there had been more time for the foundations of the constructive work to be deepened, and for the reorientation he had sought to give to it on his release from detention thirty-six months earlier an opportunity to work itself out, it could have started the country on the desired road. The people would have taken care of it themselves afterwards and held their own even against odds. Similarly, if independence had come much earlier, the communal blood-bath, which nearly submerged independence, would most probably have been avoided and in the environment of peace and non-violence the masses would have got a sporting chance to come into their own. The thought depressed him. But he continued to nurse the hope that as soon as the country had a breathing spell, he would be able to return to his unfinished task. Ever since his release in 1944, he had been having exploratory talks with the Congress leaders in this behalf.

"I want to write about the difference of outlook between us," he wrote to Pandit Nehru in one of his letters in the first week of October, 1945. "If the difference is fundamental then . . . the public should be . . . made aware of it. It would be detrimental to our work for Swaraj . . . to keep them in the dark."

The occasion was a discussion in the Working Committee on the social and economic objectives of the Congress after independence. Differences in outlook in regard to these there had been among the members even before, but they had hitherto largely been on the academic plane. In action Gandhiji's programme alone held. The realities of the freedom struggle admitted of no other alternative. With freedom round the corner, a re-examination of the fundamental position became a matter of supreme necessity.

At the end of the Working Committee meeting, it was decided that the question should again be taken up in a two or three-day session of the Committee and the position finally clarified. "But whether the Working Committee sits or not," wrote Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru, "I want our position *vis-a-vis* each other to be clearly understood by us. . . . The bond that unites us is not only political. . . . It is immeasurably deeper and . . . unbreakable. Therefore . . . I earnestly desire that in the political field also we should understand each other clearly. . . . We both live for the cause of India's freedom and we would both gladly die for it. . . . Whether we get praise or blame is immaterial to us. . . . I am now an old man. . . . *I have, therefore, named you as my heir. I must, however, understand my heir and my heir should understand me. Then alone shall I be content.*" (Italics mine). Gandhiji's letter continued:

> I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognised that people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts, not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live at peace with each other in towns and palaces. They will then have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth.
>
> I hold that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity. We can realise truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of village life and this simplicity can best be found in the Charkha and all that the Charkha connotes. I must not fear if the world today is going the wrong way. It may be that India too will go that way and like the proverbial moth burn itself eventually in the flame round which it dances more and more fiercely. But it is my bounden duty up to my last breath to try to protect India and through India the entire world from such a doom.
>
> The essence of what I have said is that man should rest content with what are his real needs and become self-sufficient. If he

does not have this control, he cannot save himself. After all, the world is made up of individuals just as it is the drops that constitute the ocean. . . . This is a well-known truth. . . .

While I admire modern science, I find that it is the old looked at in the true light of modern science which should be reclothed and refashioned aright. You must not imagine that I am envisaging our village life as it is today. The village of my dreams is still in my mind. After all, every man lives in the world of his dreams. My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men and women will be free and able to hold their own against anyone in the world. There will be neither plague, nor cholera, nor smallpox; no-one will be idle, no-one will wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labour. . . . It is possible to envisage railways, post and telegraph . . . and the like. . . .

Pandit Nehru wrote back:

The question before us is not one of truth versus untruth or non-violence versus violence. One assumes, as one must, that true cooperation and peaceful methods must be aimed at and a society which encourages these must be our objective. The whole question is how to achieve this society and what its content should be. I do not understand why a village should necessarily embody truth and non-violence. A village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent. . . .

We have to put down certain objectives like a sufficiency of food, clothing, housing, education, sanitation etc. which should be the minimum requirements for the country and for everyone. It is with these objectives in view that we must find out specifically how to attain them speedily. Again it seems to me inevitable that modern means of transport as well as many other modern developments must continue and be developed. There is no way out of it except to have them. If that is so, inevitably a measure of heavy industry exists. How far that will fit in with a purely village society? Personally I hope that heavy or light industries should all be decentralised as far as possible and this is feasible now because of the development of electric power. If two types of economy exist in the country there would be either conflict between the two or one will overwhelm the other.

The question of independence and protection from foreign aggression, both political and economic, has also to be considered

in this context. I do not think it is possible for India to be really independent unless she is a technically advanced country. I am not thinking for the moment in terms of just armies but rather of scientific growth. In the present context of the world, we cannot even advance culturally without a strong background of scientific research in every department. There is today in the world a tremendous acquisitive tendency both in individuals and groups and nations, which leads to conflicts and wars. Our entire society is based on this more or less. That basis must go and be transformed into one of cooperation, not of isolation which is impossible. If this is admitted and is found feasible then attempts should be made to realise it not in terms of an economy which is cut off from the rest of the world but rather one which cooperates. From the economic or political point of view an isolated India may well be a kind of vacuum which increases the acquisitive tendencies of others and thus creates conflicts.

There is no question of palaces for millions of people. But there seems to be no reason why millions should not have comfortable up-to-date homes where they can lead a cultured existence. Many of the present overgrown cities have developed evils which are deplorable. Probably we have to discourage this overgrowth and at the same time encourage the village to approximate more to the culture of the town. . . .

How far it is desirable for the Congress to consider these fundamental questions, involving varying philosophies of life, it is for you to judge. I should imagine that a body like the Congress should not lose itself in arguments over such matters which can only produce greater confusion in people's minds resulting in inability to act in the present. This may also result in creating barriers between the Congress and others in the country. Ultimately of course this and other questions will have to be decided by representatives of free India. I have a feeling that most of these questions are thought of and discussed in terms of long ago, ignoring the vast changes that have taken place all over the world during the last generation or more. . . . The world has completely changed since then, possibly in a wrong direction. In any event any consideration of these questions must keep present facts, forces and the human material we have today in view, otherwise it will be divorced from reality.

Pandit Nehru's letter characteristically ended on a note of last minute indecision and self-doubt — the hall-mark of his integrity and transparent sincerity. Instead of removing the question mark he had set out to remove, he ended up by adding one more of his own: "You are right in saying that the world, or a large part of it, appears

to be bent on committing suicide. That may be an inevitable development of an evil seed in civilisation that has grown. I think it is so. How to get rid of this evil, and yet how to keep the good in the present as in the past is our problem. Obviously there is good too in the present."

In their next meeting a month later, Gandhiji returned to the charge. The main premises of Pandit Nehru's letter, he pointed out, were common ground between them. In fact he could not agree with them more. They were, ensuring a parity between urban and rural standards of living, speedy attainment of "a sufficiency of food, clothing, housing, education, sanitation" etc. which should be the "minimum requirements for the country and for everyone", "true cooperation and peaceful methods" and "a society which encourages these" as being the objective to be aimed at, and finally the necessity of keeping in view "present facts, forces and the human material we have today" in any consideration of "these questions". But these, if worked out to their logical conclusion, led not to Pandit Nehru's picture or his way of achieving it but his own:

> Our talk of yesterday made me glad. I am sorry we could not prolong it further. I feel it cannot be finished in a single sitting but will necessitate frequent meetings on our part. I am so constituted that if only I were physically fit to run about, I would myself overtake you, wherever you might be, and return after a couple of days' heart-to-heart talk with you. I have done so before. It is necessary we should understand each other well and that others also should clearly understand where we stand. It would not matter if ultimately we might have to agree to differ so long as we remained one at heart, as we are today. The impression that I have gathered from our yesterday's talk is that there is not much difference in our outlook. To test this I put down below the gist of what I have understood. Please correct me if there is any discrepancy.
>
> 1. The real question, according to you, is how to bring about man's highest intellectual, economic, political and moral development. I agree entirely.
>
> 2. In this there should be an equal right and opportunity for all.
>
> 3. In other words, there should be equality between the town-dwellers and villagers in the standard of food and drink, clothing and other living conditions. In order to realise this equality today people should be able to produce their own necessaries of life, i.e. clothing, foodstuffs, dwellings and lighting and water.

4. Man is not born to live in isolation but is essentially a social animal independent and interdependent. No-one can or should ride on another's back. If we try to work out necessary conditions for such a life, we are forced to the conclusion that the unit of society should be a village or call it a manageable small group of people who would, in the ideal, be self-sufficient (in the matter of their vital requirements) as a unit and bound together in bonds of mutual cooperation and interdependence.

If I find that so far I have understood you correctly, I shall take up consideration of the second part of the question in my next.

The discussion, thereafter, however, could not be resumed owing to quick political changes and later due to outbreak of communal disorders. The issue came to a head only in the later part of 1947, after independence. Even then it could not be carried to a conclusion. It is, however, possible and it would be worthwhile to reconstruct from Gandhiji's writings, in rough outline, his unfinished argument and to examine its implications in the context of the present-day world.

2

The divergent interests of town and country, industry and agriculture have been a perennial issue since the rise of modern industry. Occasionally in the course of social and political struggles, the two sections have joined hands but the union proved to be only temporary. As soon as the common objective was achieved, the chronic antagonism between town and country asserted itself in an even acuter form.

The evil of economic and political control by one country over another for the exploitation of its raw materials, cheap labour and markets has been given its proper name, and colonialism finds very few apologists these days. The colonial system is, however, still practised in its essence by countries aspiring to effect a quick entry into the modern era *vis-a-vis* their own rural population, when industry imposes manufactured goods on the villages in quantity and at the price it desires and makes them produce raw materials in the quantity and at the price the industrialist wants. But nobody thinks anything of it. On the contrary, it is justified and even glorified in the name of "progress", "national prosperity", and so on. "Force connected with great industry," observes Gina Lombroso, "permits the consideration of all the non-industrial countries and classes — and therefore weaker— as conquered countries and classes."[1]

In industry increasing production as a rule means diminishing costs. Agriculture is, however, so constituted that it can meet increasing demands on it only by trading soil fertility. To obtain cheap raw materials for which machine production has created an insatiable demand and food and other means of subsistence without which the non-producing industrial population cannot go on, therefore, the farmer is made by various forms of subtle manipulation and coercion to produce industrial crops to the detriment of that which he needs for his own healthy subsistence. Real earnings from exhausted soil have consequently to be supplemented with "agricultural subsidies, bribes and price manipulation", and to keep the rural population contented "doppage" is resorted to in the form of cheap, factory-produced goods, luxury articles, movies, radio, automobiles and gadgets; and multiplication of roads and railways which the village could, in a large part, very well do without but which subserve the ends of industry. They hypnotise the villager so that he comes to regard them as the *sine qua non* of progress and becomes a willing instrument in his own exploitation.

Economic and social control would, under planned economy, it was at one time hoped, resolve the conflict, as in theory at least it could, and bring about a synthesis of the "field, factory and the workshop". But in practice the control, in the words of Dr. Mitrany, "has been exercised consistently" to the disadvantage of the rural community. In the result, the wide gulf between the two sections still remains unbridged. "Each is still resentful if supplies from the other fall short, or if the cost in terms of its own effort seems to place it . . . at a disadvantage."[2]

The attitude of the town-bred intellectual towards the peasant way of life is one of condescension and patronage when it is not of contempt. Gandhiji, unlike the elite, did not despise the peasant way of life which was to be made endurable by doling out "urban amenities" to the villages. Nor was the peasant in his eyes the foolish incurable reactionary of the Socialist philosophy, "at his best . . . a rural worker, at his worst . . . one who but wins a subsistence from the soil irrespective of any rights or needs of others to the soil and its productions,"[3] who had to be written off in his own interest as well as in the interest of society. On the contrary, he was the salt of the earth, the sheet-anchor of democracy. "In the case of the Indian villager, an age-old culture is hidden under an encrustment of crudeness. . . . Behind the crude exterior, you will find a deep reservoir of spirituality. . . . You will not find such a thing in the West. . . . Take away the encrustation, remove his chronic poverty and his illiteracy, and you have the finest specimen of what a cultured, cultivated, free citizen should be."[4]

Everybody admits in theory that since India lives in her villages, the village must be the State's first and foremost concern. But when

it comes to the abolition of privileges, possessed by the towns at the cost of the villager, and its inescapable corollary that public money should be spent on the villages in the same proportion in which it was collected from the villages, even the most well-intentioned wobble and take refuge in sophistries and plausible excuses which the philosophy of "progress" readily provides.

Gandhiji was forthright: "The cities with their insolent torts are a constant menace to the life and liberty of the villagers."[5] "If the cities want to demonstrate that their populations will live for the villagers of India, the bulk of their resources should be spent in ameliorating the condition of . . . the poor."[6] And again: "Villagers are being exploited and drained by the cities. . . . Under my scheme, nothing will be allowed to be produced by the cities which can be equally well produced by the villages. The proper function of cities is to serve as clearing houses for village products. . . . The villages must become self-sufficient. I see no other solution if one has to work in terms of Ahimsa."[7]

The peasant way of life has its own compensations and value in the strategy of survival. In the words of Miriam Beard, the author of *History of the Business Man*, "Men suffered on the land but survived; while in the cities they flourished—and faded." There is an unhurried wisdom and contentment in nature which is reflected in the life of the peasantry. This is sometimes mistaken for slowness and stupidity. The traditional peasant way of life gives to the peasant a security which is the aspiration of industrial masses even in the advanced countries of the West. What insurance against unemployment, sickness, want and old age etc. are calculated to give to the worker, it has been pointed out, the peasant has always found in his traditional economy. It may not bring him such "material benefits as those . . . given in the West by the State, but it is a security which he can achieve with his own hands and which leaves him free to stand on his own feet."[8]

The reciprocal relationship between frustration and aggression, both in the individual and in society, is well known. Combative instinct is inherent in man. It cannot be eradicated. It can only be transmuted. In the case of the peasant, close partnership with Mother Earth gives to him an ingrained sense of security which he can achieve by his own effort. His "innate combative instinct" is discharged in his daily struggle with nature. The peasant is, therefore, not by nature aggressive. The same holds good in respect of the handicraftsman. His combative instinct finds expression in creative work and so he lacks the desire to give expression to his destructive impulses.

The absence of this converts the factory worker, uprooted from his environment and living in an atmosphere of regimentation and mass psychology and under the constant fear of unemployment and

industrial instability due to causes over which he has no control, into an individual who, in the words of Jung, is "unstable, insecure, and suggestible."[9] Frustration leads to neurosis. He provides ready material which dictators and war-mongers exploit for their own ends.

True, the peasant also is exposed to the vagaries of the weather etc. But he can battle against them by his industry, intelligence and skill. In the final resort, he can fall back upon supplementary occupations to eke out a living. He does not feel frustrated. A community of peasant-craftsmen, is therefore naturally predisposed for peace. "There is no regime," observes Professor Seignobes, "more pacific than a democracy of peasant proprietors. Since the world began, no such community has ever desired or prepared or commenced a war."

But the peasant, while he is by nature not aggressive, is the most formidable fighter for individual freedom. "The growers of food are the last stronghold of freedom." In the words of Wilfred Wellock, "The peasant wields a weapon that is more powerful than . . . votes. He may not be able to use eloquent language, but he can live when the rest of us must die."[10]

Participation in the processes of nature whose pace, he has learnt from experience, cannot be forced, endows the peasant with "a stability and steadiness in his beliefs" and the qualities of patience, doggedness and perseverance which make him "invincible when engaged in political struggle."[11] "The peasant's power," as Dr. Mitrany has put it, "lies not in action but in resistance."[12] He is the greatest passive resister in all history, wrote Tiltman, another authority on the subject. Jefferson identified family farming with democracy.

A social order founded upon vigorous communities of peasant-craftsmen, Gandhiji held, would prove a veritable bulwark of democratic freedom, and provide a natural guarantee against any aggressive or expansionist tendency on India's part. It would be a tremendous asset to world peace.

3

The salient features of Gandhiji's system of economy are: (1) intensive, small-scale, individual, diversified farming supported by cooperative effort as opposed to mechanised, large-scale or collective farming; (2) development of cottage crafts as ancillary to agriculture; (3) cattle-based economy with strict enforcement of the "law of return" viz. to return to the soil in organic form what is taken out of the soil; (4) proper balance of animal, human and plant life, their relationship being symbiotic, i.e. one of mutually beneficial association; and (5) voluntary protection of both human and animal power against

the competition of machinery as the price of social insurance.

This has sometimes been dubbed by high-brow critics as "unprogressive, pre-scientific, mediaevalism", a reversion to the "cow-dung era" and "bullock-cart mentality". The fact of the matter is that Gandhiji was, if anything, ahead of his time. Being, however, essentially a man of action and an original thinker, he deliberately chose to clothe his ideas in the simple language of the masses through whom he had to work his revolution instead of using the current scientific jargon to express them.

Recent advances in agronomy have caused an increasing emphasis to be laid on the law of return. The one inexorable condition on which man is permitted to hold dominion over nature is that he leaves his environment better than he found it. Any infraction of this rule is visited by nature's rough and ready justice. Helped by science man has been turning soil-capital into riches at such a rate as to endanger the future of civilisation itself. Sound businesses, one need not be reminded, are not run by paying dividends out of the capital.

There is a close economic and biological linkage running through nature. Plants and animals together with the micro-organisms in the soil form one community. They draw their sustenance from the soil and return to it what they have derived from it, when they die. As some plants and some animals require more of the one element than another, vegetable and animal species associate together in mutually complementary groups. The cattle serve as "rough transformers". They convert rough vegetation into food fit for man. Besides, they enrich the soil by their droppings. The elements of life pass from the soil into the bodies of animals and plants and transmigrate from one form of life into another. This is often called "the nitrogen cycle". The elements are kept constantly in circulation. This partnership is what is known as "symbiosis"—the process that keeps the life's cycle going.

In addition to the economic and the biological, there is another aspect of man's being that enters into relationships with nature, namely, the spiritual. When the balance between the spiritual and the material is disturbed, sickness results.

"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not for every man's greed," said Gandhiji. So long as we cooperate with the cycle of life, the soil renews its fertility indefinitely and provides health, recreation, sustenance and peace to those who depend on it. But when the "predatory" attitude prevails, nature's balance is upset and there is an all-round biological deterioration. Upon a proper relationship and balance between man and animal and animal and plant life, therefore, depends the health of the soil and of society. The health of man, animal and plant depends upon that of the soil, "the healthily-fed soil transfers health to the plant, the plant transfers

health to animal and man, and man, by his wise agriculture, transfers it back to the soil. This is the 'Wheel of Health'."[13]

The soil is not merely inert matter. It is a living laboratory where the process of the renewal of life by the interaction of living organisms and organic matter is constantly at work. The notion that fertility is merely a matter of N K P supply—supply of nitrogen, potash and phosphorus—in large enough quantities and can always be renewed by applying large doses of chemical fertilisers to the soil no longer holds. Soil structure, soil life and soil stability all have a close bearing on soil fertility. Sound soil structure is largely a result of the amount of humus and micro-life in the soil. Most serious consequences to the soil are known to result from the loss of the porosity or sponginess of the soil due to lack of humus which decayed animal and plant-remains provide.

Apart from the food for plants and the humus which decayed vegetation and animal-remains provide, the living vegetation provides a protective covering to the soil that shields it from the erosive action of wind and rain. Improvident denudation of forests for the exploitation of their timber wealth to meet the demands of "modern living",[14] or for reclamation of land; over-grazing and raising of live-stock for trade; and indiscriminate use of mechanical tractors denude the soil of this covering.[15] Deep ploughing tears up the matted grass-roots and turns them back into the soil where they serve as green manure. It gives bumper crops to begin with followed usually by a rapid decline. Absence of protective covering for the soil or of the grass-roots to bind the soil together accentuates erosion and adversely affects the water-holding capacity of the sub-soil on which more than on the total rainfall, the productivity of the soil depends. More and more of rainfall runs off the soil and is wasted. It is not unusual for "run-off" in this way to increase from the normal 1-2 per cent. to 10-20 per cent. i.e. ten times in the course of a few years. It affects, too, humidity and rainfall and temperature of the soil—in short, climate. Even when meteorological records show no appreciable change, the climate in effect progressively deteriorates. "Light rains become useless, heavy rains destructive, normal winds have the effect of tornadoes."[16]

Once the forest or the vegetation covering of the soil is destroyed, no engineering skill in the world can, except in a small and temporary way, control the fury of the rivers in spate or the destructive action of wind and rain that sweep over the unprotected soil. Millions of tons of top soil may thus be blown away by dust storms in a matter of days, ruining thousands of acres of land at the site of erosion. Where the dust settles down all vegetation is choked and the same process is set going over again. Rivers run amok; in the place of their even, crystal-clear flow, we have turbulent torrents of muddy

water, intermittent in their character; river-beds become raised on account of silting; inland navigation is impaired, floods become more frequent and progressively worse with every attempt to confine them by putting up river embankments; storage reservoirs for flood-control, for hydro-electric purposes, or for public water-supplies become silted up behind their dams and are rendered useless with incredible rapidity;[17] springs, wells and tanks dry up in summer. What was a picture of idyllic loveliness is turned into a desolate waste. The ethical pattern of man's behaviour thus stamps itself not only on his social environment but has a decisive influence on nature itself.

An essential characteristic of true farming is that "it is not a business, it is a way of life." In the words of Lord Northbourne, "Farming is a part of man and man a part of farming." It becomes "rape of the soil" when the soil is used as means to becoming wealthy by converting it into cash.

Formerly, when agriculture was a mode of life, not only the farmer but also the urban community was vitally interested in the yield from the soil year after year. But today if yield from the land dwindles, owing to soil exhaustion or any other cause, the townsman scarcely bothers about it as long as enough food supplies can be had cheaply from elsewhere. It matters little to him if to meet the need of the industrial proletariat the soil of one country after another is ruined. There is always still some other source to draw upon. Increased facilities for transportation and for food preservation have created an irresistible temptation to barter soil fertility for money like any other commodity, and severed the biological link between civilisation and the soil. This "highly profitable despoliation" of the soil by commerce and industry has made certain nations exceedingly rich financially but impoverished the earth.

When the "demands of an expanding civilisation" exceed the recuperative capacity of the soil, erosion sets in. Erosion is essentially the "symptom of maladjustment between human society and its environment."[18] Climate alone is never its cause but man's ignorance and more than that, man's greed. Edward Hyams, the well-known authority on agronomy, has vividly described the consequences of misapplied science joined to an exploitative economy thus:

> The capitalist, with a whacking great dividend in mind, and the Marxist, with a factory population to feed . . . are blissfully ignorant or criminally indifferent to the fact that their "scientist" is sloppily inefficient and wasteful; for, instead of using the natural cycle cleverly to exploit plant life which constantly remakes its own nutrients in humus, he first of all exhausts the existing humus and then has to build and operate huge factories to make artificial fertilisers and distribute them, at enormous expense. The

agricultural industrialist, seeing that trees fetch money for wood pulp . . . cuts them down. . . . The soil might have been all right, even without trees, but the agricultural industrialist . . . has noticed that the paper cost of cultivating a million acres of wheat and a million acres of cotton in single blocks, is less than that of the 10,000 mixed farms. . . . So he has been drawing on one set of nutrients year after year, pouring in millions of tons of expensive artificial fertilisers because he no longer has a live soil but dead dust . . . which the first wind blows off the naked rock and into the sea. . . . Thereupon the Marxist, if he is inside the U.S.S.R. . . . plants forests and grass and prepares to wait for nature to restore the cycle; the capitalist says: "What the hell? There's always Amazonia when we've used up our own." . . . It's such an old story. First, the rich Yellow Earth of China ruined by the imposition of urban values; then the even richer tropical soil of Sind reduced to a barren desert by the great city populations of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro . . . and so following, until the destruction, in less than fifty years, of the great fertile plains of the Middle West, by American capitalist greed and indiscipline; and the lasting shame of the Dust Bowl. Because of the industrialist, the anti-peasant, *man has become a noxious disease organism of life on Earth.*[19]

Subsistence farming is essentially diversified farming; it is conservation farming. When farming is taken up as a way of life, the farmer is careful not to extract more out of the soil than is warranted by the power of the soil to recuperate and he omits no skill that human ingenuity stimulated by self-interest has devised to conserve its fertility. He knows that his family has to draw subsistence from it from year to year and from generation to generation. He cannot afford to let its fertility be impaired. But when land is worked for riches—to produce money crops without respite, or food or live-stock for export to meet the requirements of non-producing urban industrial proletariats, its fertility is exported with the farm produce.[20]

The loss is sought to be made up by the use of artificial fertilisers. But food grown in the absence of natural humus, is found to be deficient in certain life sustaining principles though it may look fine. There may be bumper crops of wheat with fine, large grain, and fruits and vegetables of prize-size that are the pride of horticultural shows and exhibitions but unlike the products grown on a soil rich in humus with the help of organic manure, when fed to animals they produce malnutrition symptoms. McCarrison in his memo submitted to the Royal Commission on Agriculture testified:

They (plants as well as animals) cannot thrive, nor their

> seed attain to the fullest "reproductive quality" unless they be provided, in addition to the mineral constituents of their food, with certain organic substance known as "auximones". These substances are as essential to the normal metabolism of plants as vitamins are to the normal metabolism of men and animals. They not only make the plant to build up from the simple ingredients derived from the soil those organic complexes required as food by men and animals but they enable it to elaborate vitamins without which the organic complexes cannot be properly utilised by the animal organism. Auximones are provided in the soil from decaying organic matter by the action of certain soil bacteria, and the best organic manure for this purpose is farmyard manure.[21]

Health is a matter not only of right food but food that is grown from healthy soil.[22]

As for the imported food, it must in the first instance be processed, i.e. rendered inert, to prevent change taking place during transit and storage. It becomes devitalised.[23] The result in either case is malnutrition for the population that subsists on it. Mal-nutrition these days is rarely a "quantitative phenomenon". Consumption of devitalised food leaves the individual dissatisfied even when the stomach is full.[24] Being dissatisfied, he over-eats. In the end the power of assimilation fails, the taste deteriorates. When that happens, even food that is good is either wasted or rendered unacceptable. "Quality of the products of the soil," observes Lord Northbourne, "depends on the directness of man's relation to the soil, and on that relation being symbiotic, not predatory; that is, on the nutrition cycle being unbroken."[25]

It is scarcely realised how high the incidence of malnutrition can run even in a highly prosperous and abundantly fed country where wrong agricultural practices prevail. Even in the United States, the late President Roosevelt disclosed, "one-third of the nation did not get enough protective foods."[26] "Doctors . . . know," writes Gilbert C. Wilson in "Chemurgic Uses for Old and New Crops", "that . . . many sick people are just hungry people with full stomachs. . . . The relationship between poor, eroded, mineral-deficient soils and the sickly, anaemic people that exist on them should be obvious even to the casual observer."[27] The Selective Service Administration in the U.S.A. found that whereas in some areas, where the fertility of the land was exhausted, seventy per cent. of men had to be rejected for physical impairment from military services; where the land was still fertile the corresponding percentage was thirty per cent. only.[28]

Having plundered the countryside of its soil capital, civilisation proceeds next to waste what it has plundered. According to Professor

King, "On the basis of the data of Wolff, Kellner, and Carpenter, or of Hall, the people of the United States and of Europe are pouring into the sea, lakes or rivers, or into underground waters, from 5,794,300 to 12,000,000 pounds of nitrogen, 1,881,900 to 4,151,000 pounds of potassium, and 777,200 to 3,057,600 pounds of phosphorus per million of population annually."[29]

Soil erosion has today become a world phenomenon. Already it has turned over one million square miles into a desert while "a far larger area is approaching desert condition."[30] General Smuts declared erosion to be the "biggest problem confronting the country, bigger than any politics."[31] Experts have warned us that our present-day economy based on money values and the desire to exploit nature for quick profits has set deserts on the march and in the course of one century "*brought to the world's richest virgin lands a desolation compared with which all the ravages of the wars in history are negligible.*"[32] (Italics mine). Erosion, in the words of Jacks and White, "has . . . been one of the most potent factors causing the downfall of former civilisations and empires whose ruined cities now lie amid barren wastes that once were the world's most fertile lands."[33] It is "humbling mighty nations, re-shaping their domestic and external policies and . . . altering the course of world history more radically than any war or revolution."[34]

Erosion is not an isolated phenomenon. Rather it is like a cancer, a "localised symptom of a generalised pathological condition". There is this difference, however, that in the case of erosion the actual cause may be located as much on the site of the occurrence as "thousands of miles away from it". Erosion, therefore, does not admit of local or mere symptomatic treatment. It is a man-made disease and a highly contagious disease at that. A country ravaged by war may be restored to prosperity in a few years but a field denuded of its soil, we are warned, continues to spread devastation all around even after its own ruin is complete. "Cities may spring up like mushrooms, railways and roads may span a country, bank balances may multiply, but while the soil is deteriorating and disappearing the net movement is away from rather than towards a civilised state."[35]

The onset of erosion is generally insidious. But once it gets under way, it spreads destruction in a geometrical progression.[36] All the productive capacity of the earth is confined to the thin living top layer of the soil which may vary from a few inches to a few feet in depth. Beneath it is a planet "as lifeless as the moon". It takes nature, we are told, not less but probably more than a thousand years for one inch of soil formation. But in the State of Missouri alone, it was recorded, the rate of erosion was such "as would result in the disappearance of seven inches of soil in twenty-four years." The ultimate result of unchecked soil erosion is "national extinction".[37]

There is, however, a crumb of comfort. It is not too late yet.

The earth, if wisely handled, is rich enough still to maintain the existing human population even with its present rate of increase, for a long time to come. But if we do not retrace our steps betimes, we may find one day that the limit of safety has been passed and the process has become irreversible. In the words of Professor N. S. Shaler of Harvard University, "If mankind cannot devise and enforce a way of dealing with the earth which will preserve the source of life, we must look forward to a time . . . when our kind having wasted its great inheritance, will fade from the earth because of the ruin it has accomplished."[38] If our civilisation, therefore, is not to come to grief like the twenty-one civilisations whose history Dr. Toynbee has traced, we have no choice but to return from an exploitative economy to the economy of permanence.

The Royal Commission on Agriculture of 1935 reported that most of the area under cultivation in India had been under cultivation "for hundreds of years, and had reached its state of maximum impoverishment many years ago", and that "extensive areas" on the banks of large rivers had "lost all agricultural value".[39] Yet it devoted to the question of soil conservation just 1 page out of 675.

When soil erosion affects a whole country, it calls for "changing fundamentally the country's management and the way of the life of the people."[40] In the face of falling averages of production from the land and a rising population, therefore, there is no other course for such a country, as in the case of India, but to return to intensive, subsistence farming based on cattle economy as a way of life, supported by supplementary cottage industries. It offers the best chance for survival in the long run.

Paradoxical though it may sound, when the soil is denuded of its covering of vegetation a dense settled cover of population "up to the limit which the land can support" provides the best insurance against the forces causing erosion. "The densities of their populations give every acre of land a national value that may be out of all proportion to their money-earning power. The . . . people are compelled at all costs to conserve their soil. Conservation farming comes . . . naturally to them."[41]

This means that the people have to make up their mind to forego the short-cut to prosperity and power by converting soil capital into cash which applied science dangles before us, to curtail production of export commodities and learn to adjust themselves to a lower standard of living. It is a strong and unpalatable remedy but it is a remedy that "the Earth cannot forego until the wounds on its surface are healed." Sustained diligence and self-denial alone can restore what man's slovenliness and greed have despoiled. As Lord Northbourne put it: "When we want to be severely practical, we still say 'let us get back to earth.'"[42]

4

No single factor has contributed more to the phenomenon of world-wide erosion and soil exhaustion than the great possibilities that have been opened up of "getting rich quickly" with the help of "new and powerful machines"[43] and "the transfer of capital across regional or political boundaries."[44] In the words of Lord Northbourne, "International debt and soil erosion are twin brother and sister."[45] Nineteenth century economy, particularly in the British Empire with its expanding power industry, colonial system of rule and huge overseas financial investments by the European powers, gave rise to a heavy, ceaseless drain of food and raw materials from the countries affected by it. Vast regions of the earth were as a result depleted of their soil fertility. "The New World acquired in a few years the fruits of the Old World's thousand-year struggle with Nature."[46] Western nations achieved a meteoric burst of prosperity and power for themselves without straining the soil within their own borders but only by robbing other countries of their soil fertility that had been maintained for thousands of years. In the exploited countries, as in India, population increased, roads and railways were built, there was rapid expansion of trade and industry, new cities sprang up, higher living standards were achieved for the privileged class, forests were cleared, pastures brought under cultivation, insects and vermin "which hold the balance between the organic and inorganic forces" were annihilated. But all this outward show of progress in the exploited countries was paid for in progressive deterioration of the soil, silted up rivers, recurring floods, droughts, dust-storms and famines and disease due to the deepening poverty and lowered stamina of the masses.

Money and mechanism today rule our society. "But a yet greater reality than they is the soil."[47] Agriculture, remarked Napolean during his exile at St. Helena, is "the soul, the foundation of the kingdom". Trade and industry are good only when they are a sign of exuberant vitality. They cannot by themselves create vitality. Indeed they may be indicative of just the reverse. India's industrial development, for instance, and her favourable trade balances under the British rule were a sign not of her prosperity but exploitation.

So long as food and raw materials continue to be produced in one region to be consumed in another in bulk in pursuit of the philosophy of unlimited material wants in a limited world, nature's equilibrium cannot be maintained. The foundations of the economy of permanence can be laid only on the firm rock of regional self-sufficiency or, as Gandhiji called it, Swadeshi. Lord Northbourne is not alone in holding

that "it would almost certainly be better for humanity at large if trade in food, other than a few delicacies, were unknown." Other kinds of trade and commerce would then "tend to flourish exceedingly."[48]

We have, therefore, to break free from money values and to learn to regard proper and full use of human and animal resources not only as the means but also as the end of our economy; to cultivate an attitude of humility towards nature and of "reverence for life" including not only trees and plants but wild life as well.

Insects and worms and some of the rodents and burrowing animals play an important part in the restoration and maintenance of the soil's equilibrium. Earthworms are known to turn and aerate the soil to a depth of from 4 to 6 feet. Some animals though not directly useful to agriculture "fit into a complicated ecological scheme, as one of the links in a food cycle."[49] They may provide food to other species that are useful to agriculture or indirectly help agriculture by living upon insects, plants and animals that are destructive of crops. Some birds in this way more than compensate the farmer for all the grain they eat by destroying insects and pests harmful to him. The conservation of wild life has consequently come to be regarded in the United States "as an integral part of the conservation of soil, vegetation and water." According to the Annual Report for 1936-37 of the Bureau of Animal Population of the University of Oxford, "There is no human being who is not directly or indirectly influenced by animal populations. . . . There is less of a moral problem," the report goes on to say, "about going out on a doubtful day without an umbrella than there is in ordering the destruction of a species on the chance that it may be doing harm to human interests." Soil erosion, one of the foremost authorities on soil conservation tells us, "has made a knowledge of the underlying principle of human ecology — the art of living together with animals, insects and plants — one of the most urgent needs of mankind."[50]

Above all, we have to learn to put a curb on our material wants. Soil erosion and floods are phenomena practically unknown to nature in the raw, where man has not upset its ordered domain by his ignorant interference and short-sighted greed. The disharmony in nature is only a part of the disharmony within our own being. To eradicate it, we have to restore the balance between the material and the spiritual. This is the function of religion. "Religion . . . is needed for an enduring food supply for man and for a sound ecological relationship between man and earth and all its other creatures. Only the spirit is strong enough to curb man's unruly desire for power, his selfishness, greed, pride, short-sightedness, and tendency to exploit others."[51]

A wag has described Socialism as "capitalism with a different pair of pants". Witticism apart, the observation has a solid foundation in fact. Both Socialism and capitalism have based themselves on the same set of values. They are both ruled largely by utilitarian and

efficiency consideration. Their struggle for supremacy is within the same framework of dominant urbanism and money values. Socialism has taken it for granted that all "the problems of production were solved by capitalism" long ago and all that remains to be done is "to redistribute the fruits in more equitable fashion."[52] Both share the Marxist prejudice against the peasant and look forward to the day when farming would be done away with, and agriculture carried on as an "industry" with machines and armies of land workers. "Is it not . . . self-evident," wrote H. J. Massingham, the well-known English publicist, in *The New Statesman and Nation*, "that science which has created the industrial State . . . regards the peasant as belonging to an outmoded form of society, as almost the equivalent of the savage and as an impediment to the full development of a more enlightened agriculture?" The fact must be faced, he went on to add, that industrial civilisation is "radically hostile to the peasant" and "not until industrialism is itself modified can his value and necessity . . . be seen in right perspective."[53]

There are, however, signs of a coming change. While there were ample food surpluses to draw upon, the cities could go on with their "wholesale plunder" of the chemical fertility and physical structure of the soil. But with half the civilised world now living in cities and a steady increase in the world's population, it is now beginning to be realised that this must stop. Food-exporting areas have less and less of food available for export. Industry can, therefore, no longer count upon endless supplies from outside to keep it going as in the heyday of its power. It was time, Edward Hyams recently warned, that in a world of shrinking food resources we learnt to "break free of the preoccupation with an urban, industrial state of mind", understood the "difference between a peasantry and a rural population of proletarians" and "set about creating a peasantry."[54]

Civilisations come and civilisations go but the land remains. "If a civilisation is such that it degrades the soil, then it is the civilisation, and not the soil, that comes to an end."[55] Sooner or later, therefore, sooner rather than later, we have got to come to terms with nature and start building afresh from the start. The struggle for existence that has hitherto principally been a struggle for markets is bound in not very distant future to become a struggle for water. Civilisation will then have to set about to base itself on a new, symbiotic relationship with nature. In that set up it is obvious that subsistence farming-cum-handicrafts will have to be the way of life for the bulk of the population. The social and political ascendancy of the town will end, "the power of the country in relation to that of the towns will increase. The men who rule the rivers according to the way they manage the land, will rule the nation. They may not have the wealth, but collectively they will have the power now in the hands of the captains of industry. Industry will become the handmaid of a balanced and

fruitful agriculture upon whose enduring prosperity the fate of the towns will depend."[56]

5

Of late there have been several movements toward the dispersion of industry. Concentration of industry in big towns, it has been found, is not good for industry itself and in any case the advent of the atom bomb has rendered dispersion of industry inevitable. By breaking up big industrial units into a number of small ones and removing them to the villages, it is claimed, industrialism will be cured of most of its glaring evils and the conflict between industry and agriculture will be resolved. Geographical dispersion of industry and its location in the countryside is, however, as different from the decentralised economy that Gandhiji aimed at as chalk is from cheese. As an economic and social policy, decentralisation can be effective only on the basis of individual production, and individual production is not mass production on a reduced scale. Individual handicrafts production and mass-production in the villages represent two rival, incompatible and mutually exclusive systems of economy with different norms, *raison d'etre* and spheres of utility. When Henry Ford hit upon the idea of the assembly-line taking jobs to the workers instead of the workers having to walk to various jobs in different parts of the workshop, it was unquestionably a more economical way of factory management. It cut down costs but it did not mean any abatement of either the profits or the power of the industrial magnate. Dispersion of industry and its location in the countryside to facilitate mass production in the vicinity of the homes of the country folk, by taking the assembly-line right into the countryside, might provide to the industrialist a more thorough and efficient means of the economic and biological exploitation of the material and human resources of the countryside. It turns the farm into an adjunct to the factory and the countryside into a larder for the non-producing industrial city proletariat to draw upon, but it means absolutely no lessening of the political and economic control of industry and high finance, rather the reverse. The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. The city must get off the back of the village. But industrialisation on a mass scale, as Gandhiji pointed out, would "necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers, as the problems of competition and marketing come in."[57] The city-bred intellectual, therefore, who wants to revive the village without foreswearing industrialisation and mass-production is like a well-meaning philanthropist fancying he can, by his charity, help the man on whose back he is riding without getting off his back. The Charkha and the allied industries

alone, maintained Gandhiji, could stop exploitation of the villages, and abolish all inequalities both social and economic between the urban and the rural. "The rising consciousness of the strength which non-violence gives to the people, and their intelligent refusal to cooperate in their slavery must bring about equality."[58]

In his luminous study *Life and the Death of the Christian West*, characterised by H. J. Massingham in his foreword to it as "full of power and vision" and "decidedly prophetic", Albert Gleizes has brilliantly analysed the fallacy underlying the favourite modern concept of the resuscitation of village life by the "modernisation of the village". The modern "intellectual", he observes, has come to realise that "the Great City is not an organism which adds, but an organism which subtracts" and the desertion from the countryside must be fought. He is quite concerned about it and there is no question as to his sincerity. But having lost contact with reality the intellectuals have become incapable of "burning what they have worshipped and worshipping what they have burnt. . . . The notion of progress prevents them from getting rid of all the things that cumber the scene." They do not wish to forego any of their "conquests". They imagine that "by mass-production organised in the homes, by rendering the pleasures of town life accessible to country folk, by bringing to them the joys of the telephone, the follies of the cinema, and the cacophony of wireless, the country youths will be induced to remain in their homes, even though at the same time the primary school, democratic and state-controlled, intellectualises them and adapts them to everything except life on the land." This is a vain hope. The decay of the countryside is, in the final analysis, the result of a mental attitude, a sense of values which the Great City embodies. The town, therefore, cannot "because of that very state of mind, exercise outwardly an influence which would be a negation of itself. It is . . . consistent in spreading outwards and demanding a state of submission to itself." This is the reason why, Gleizes concludes, the city-bred intellectuals' panaceas for the ills of the countryside all prove inadequate. So long as they have not changed their own way of life and themselves guard "most jealously" their peculiar city mentality, their best intentions notwithstanding, their measures are bound to go askew and "bring about the very results they fear."

"Mankind must refrain," warns Eric Morgan in his monograph *Vitality and Civilisation*, "from imposing middle class urban standards upon her out-of-door rural civilisation." Urbanisation of the villages can bring no gain to civilisation. It can only result in the drying up at the source of the springs of vitality from which the urban has been in the habit of replenishing his exhausted stock.

It follows from this that the recovery of the countryside will come not by extension of "urban amenities" to the village but by a

renunciation of the material values that the city stands for, or, as Gandhiji used to say, by the intelligentsia dying to the town to be reborn in the village. Those who have the faith must, therefore, in the words of Albert Gleizes, find their "way back to the country and have enough patience to wait for the home-coming of those who, even against their will, must one day return to it."[59]

6

There is in mechanism an illusory quality even at its hypothetical best. It holds out glittering promises which at first sight seem to be perfectly capable of fulfilment. But at the same time it sets up compensatory reactions which largely nullify its achievements. For instance, it creates new and ever expanding fields of employment but it displaces men already employed quicker than it creates new jobs. In the result "one man and a machine replace ten hand workers. . . . One man stays and nine men go. Society has gained a cheaper process, and nine men have lost their jobs. The final net gain is not always so clear."[60] No answer has yet been found to the problem of "frictional unemployment" and the advent of automation threatens to make matters worse.

Take next the progress in the means of locomotion. It should have enabled us to cut down travelling time. But, as Bertrand Russell has pointed out, there seems to be a law that instead of cutting down travelling time, improvement in the means of transportation only increases the area over which people travel and consequently the time they spend in travelling—first by enabling them to live at a distance from their work, then compelling them to do so. In the words of Austin Freeman, what was to begin with a matter of choice soon became a matter of necessity. "The increased speed and increased distances became the normal speed and distances, upon which the ordinary conditions of life were based."[61] Human activities became adjusted to the new facilities and in becoming adjusted absorbed the surplus. Increased facilities for locomotion have thus actually robbed man of leisure so that after a century of mechanical progress everybody complains of the "hurry", "strenuousness" and "lack of leisure" of "these days of high pressure", and nostalgically looks back to the quiet, unhurried life of old days when there were fewer "conveniences of life" but more comfort, restricted production but greater abundance of the fundamental necessaries of life within the reach of everybody.

The increased productive efficiency by the use of the machine likewise is largely offset by the mounting cost of finding suitable substitutes for natural resources that are being squandered at a fantastic rate, owing to the wasteful habits in consumption and careless

handling of raw materials in the process of manufacture engendered by "disrespect" for cheap products of machine industry. "All the Western nations," observes Stuart Chase, "have demonstrated their fitness to be classed as prodigal sons."[62]

It has been argued that the fear of the depletion of natural resources is greatly exaggerated like fears about possible cooling of the sun or shift in the earth's axis. "The miracles of science are yet in their infancy, surely something will be found," it is airily declared. "I know all about the miracles of science," answers Stuart Chase, "and some of its majestic failures—and, I ask you, gentlemen, what precisely, and at what cost, will be found?"[63]

Finally, take cheapness. Mass-production has cut down paper costs. But for every problem that the machine has solved, it has created many more that did not exist before, and which even the majestic march of science has been unable to cope with or has been able to cope with only in part. Can any wonder drug or wizardry of modern surgery make up for the alarming spread of cancer, diabetes, hyper-tension and heart-diseases due to "modern living"? We first deprive the people of the benefits of natural life—fresh air, sunshine and fresh, whole foods by uprooting them from their natural environment and aggregating them in specialised areas and then try to provide them with artificial ultra-violet light, concentrated vitamins, public parks, air-conditioning and suburban workers' settlements as substitutes. And what poor substitutes they are! The colossal problems in national health and fitness which this creates; providing of transport and civic amenities, and sickness, old age and unemployment insurance benefits to masses of men cut off from the springs of vitality swells the budget of social costs. The biological cost and the cost in terms of social unrest, class conflict and mental ill health; reckless squandering of natural resources and the resulting deterioration of man's inheritance are even heavier. But as these are all "long term bills collectable in the indeterminate future", and do not enter into the balance-sheet of the money costs of production, nobody bothers about them and the illusion of "prosperity" and "cheapness" continues.

Before independence in the early stages of the labours of the Planning Committee appointed by the Congress—the precursor of the present Planning Commission—it was once suggested to the Committee that if a small excise duty to the tune of two and a half per cent. or so were put on mill cloth and a corresponding subsidy given to Khadi, it would equalise the price of Khadi and mill cloth. The reply given was that it would be "wrong in principle" to prop up "inherently uneconomical industries" and make them compete with machine production as it would curtail the "productive capacity" of the country. Gandhiji rebutted this. It was the factory product, he pointed out, that had over long periods received and still continued to receive visible

and invisible subsidy at the cost of the tax-payer in the form of cheap railway transport, special municipal facilities, agricultural and food policies designed to cheapen the cost of the raw materials and food for the non-producing urban and industrial population at the cost of the non-urban; housing and other amenities for the industrial labour; institutions for technical research and training, and so on. But as this at the same time provided us with concomitants of progress — quick travelling, motor cars, radio, cinema, electric light and a thousand and one thrills of city life to which we have got accustomed—we did not mind the cost.

Cheapness or dearness of a commodity is thus not an inherent quality but a "conferred attribute". It cannot be considered apart from the values and the way of life we consider desirable for ourselves. It is part of a "package deal". Apart from it, it has no validity. Nothing can be cheaper than Khadi when it is produced from the cotton grown by the consumer himself for his own use. Nor can any supply of synthetic vitamins take the place of what home-grown fresh vegetables, unprocessed whole foods and sunshine provide free to the worker who works upon and lives on and out of his plot of land. Similarly can there be any substitute for the natural health, vigour and vitality which direct relationship with the soil gives to the peasantry? But when our preoccupation is with money values and our thinking in terms of "prestige" and "power", the demands of commerce and industry become easily equated with "national interest". The things that make for the primary well-being of man are neglected.

Take the losing battle that was fought in the nineteen twenties over the question of restoration of the ancient overflow irrigation system of Bengal. It had answered the need of rural Bengal for over two thousand years. Not only did it provide an ideal single solution to Bengal's inter-locking problems of flood and malaria control, cheap inland transport for the better part of the year and renewal of soil fertility but it also brought into being a community organisation based on irrigation rights which, by requiring each to regard his neighbour's interest as his own, elevated all those who engaged in it, and provided "a better field for developing character than any school."[64]

There is a heavy rainfall in Bengal in the wet season. But owing to the peculiar nature of sub-soil, the underground water-level sinks rapidly after the rains and a serious shortage of water supply occurs at a time when it is most needed. As a result tanks and wells dry up or become stagnant and breed malaria and a host of other epidemics. The only remedy for it, it was pointed out by Dr. Bentley, the then Director of Public Health, Bengal, in his masterly thesis, "Malaria and the Irrigation in Bengal" was to flush them and "to maintain

saturation of the sub-soil by impounding as much of rainfall as possible on the surface and keeping it there as long as possible." This was formerly done—particularly in the western and central division of Bengal—by flooding the tanks and rice fields with the muddy spill of the rivers in spate and storing up the rain water in tanks. Of the latter there were at one time over fifty thousand in operation in Burdwan district alone. Percolation from the rice fields and from the storage tanks maintained the underground reserve of water at a level 10 to 15 feet higher than it is today and prevented the drying up of wet crops in summer and of wells and tanks in the dry season. A system of what were originally irrigation canals dug by human labour existed in Bengal from very ancient times. The silt-bearing top film of water from the rivers in flood was led into the rice fields, where the silt deposited. River silt has a very high manureal value. It enriched the cultivation and killed noxious weeds in the tanks and in the rice fields. Every tank and every rice field had its distributory, respectively to flush or to irrigate it. Along with the silt came the eggs of the carp. Carp is a larvicidal fish. It devoured all the larvae of the anapholes, besides providing much needed nourishment to the rice eating peasantry. Removal of the silt from the river water prevented the silting up of the rivers at the mouth so that there were no floods. But during a period of misrule and political chaos which disorganised the peasantry and the high degree of cooperation that is necessary for the operation of this system, the water channels got silted up and later were declared by ignorant British engineers to be "dead" or "blind" ("kana"). A series of devastating floods followed. Erection of protective embankments to confine them made them worse. The water-tight protective embankments and the railway embankment of the Eastern Bengal Railway cut across the natural contours of the land, interrupting the natural drainage. A severe epidemic of malaria followed almost immediately, carrying off in one district one-third of the total population in a decade. Areas that were once celebrated as "health resorts" became "decadent areas". Sir William Willcocks, one of the greatest irrigation engineers that the world has known, in vain pleaded that trifling initial expenditure—as such expenditures go—was all that was necessary to resuscitate these "dead-rivers" with the cooperation of the peasantry. The vicious circle once broken, the rest of the project would then pay its way. But the rivalry of the steam navigation river flotilla companies and of railway transport came in the way. In the result the one thing that could have restored to the peasantry "the old prosperous days, when irrigation with the muddy water of the Ganges flood was the heritage of all"[65] was never attempted. Millions upon millions were spent on malaria and flood control projects. And for seventy years, embankments were allowed "to impoverish lands, and impoverish people and afflict them with malaria,

when a trifling expenditure of money could bring relief."[66] In the words of Sir William Willcocks : "The Irrigation Department has tried its hand at every kind of irrigation except the ancient irrigation. The resulting poverty of soil, destruction of fish, introduction of malaria and congestion of the rivers have stalked the canals and banks, and the country is strewn today with the wrecks of useless and harmful works."[67]

Gandhiji had no partiality for primitive methods of production as such. He only challenged the sanity of what so often passes for progress these days. "I have heard many of our countrymen say," he wrote, "that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to suggest that such an attempt, if it is made, is foredoomed to failure. We cannot be 'wise, temperate and furious' in a moment. . . . It is not possible to conceive gods inhabiting a land which is made hideous by the smoke and the din of mill chimneys and factories and whose roadways are traversed by rushing engines, dragging numerous cars crowded with men who know not for the most part what they are after, who are often absent-minded, and whose tempers do not improve by being uncomfortably packed like sardines in boxes and finding themselves in the midst of utter strangers, who would oust them if they could and whom they would, in their turn, oust similarly. I refer to these things because they are held to be symbolical of material progress. But they add not an atom to our happiness."[68]

It is a curious perversion of logic, explained only by the highly befuddled sophistication of the modern mind divorced from realities, to claim as triumphs of science cures however marvellous in themselves they may be, for ills which we ourselves have, in the first place, created and which multiply at a faster rate than our ability to cope with them. Gandhiji was uncompromisingly opposed to the "mania for mass production" which made production an end in itself to be achieved by the sacrifice of human values in the pursuit of the abstraction called "national wealth" and "prosperity". "Granting for the moment," he observed, "that machinery may supply all the needs of humanity, still, it would concentrate production in particular areas, so that you would have to go about in a round-about way to regulate distribution, whereas, if there is production and distribution both in the respective areas where things are required, it is automatically regulated, and there is less chance for fraud, none for speculation. . . . When production and consumption both become localised, the temptation to speed up production, indefinitely and at any price, disappears. All the endless difficulties and problems that our present-day economic system presents, too, would then come to an end. . . . Oh yes, mass-production certainly . . . but mass-production (on individual basis) in people's own homes. If you multiply individual production millions of times, would it not give you

mass-production on a tremendous scale? . . . Your 'mass-production' is . . . production by the fewest possible number through the aid of highly complicated machinery. . . . My machinery must be of the most elementary type which I can put in the homes of the millions."[69]

Gandhiji wanted man to be restored to his proper place in the scheme of things, and production to be geared to the primary well-being of man instead of men being used as expendable material to increase production. Where money and mechanism rule, said Gandhiji, "capital exploits the labour of a few to multiply itself, but the sum total of the labour of the crores, wisely utilised, automatically increases the wealth of the crores."[70] He wanted labour to be so used that production should itself be a source of life, joy, and freedom, instead of any one of these being sacrificed to production and all to money values. Therein lay the key to true democracy.

7

What about the standard of living? Would this not lead to a "lower standard of living"? The answer depends on what we mean by a high standard of living. If by "a high standard of living" is meant that those who have not enough to eat should have plenty of fresh, wholesome, balanced diet, those who are naked should have simple but artistic, durable clothes, those who are living in ill-lighted, ill-ventilated slums or have no shelters should have sunny, airy, cozy dwellings amid agreeable surroundings to live in, then the system of economy recommended by Gandhiji is the most efficient, the most inexpensive and the surest way of insuring a decent standard of living to the people at large in the immediate present.

This is not, however, what is probably meant when people talk of raising the living standard. By the raised standard of living they mean "modern living". The false values which we have adopted make us think that if a man wields the hoe on his farm and consumes home-grown, garden-fresh vegetables and fruit, it is a low, primitive style of living. If the people grow up in healthy, natural surroundings so that they sing and play out of sheer exuberance of the joy of living, they are uncultured village louts. But if they sit glumly round the radio and listen to "canned" music in the selection of which they have no choice, it is the hall-mark of culture. If the worker plies his craft in his village where he will have fresh air and sunshine free all the year round, a variety in his occupation and natural opportunities for recreation, it is a rustic style of living. But if he is provided a fortnight's escape from the soul-killing toil of the

factory with a free holiday in the countryside, it is the realisation of the workers' utopia.

In Gandhiji's world, the people may have less of the gaudy goods of life—fewer "toys of civilisation"—but they will live in close contact with nature and enjoy abundance of fresh, wholesome food which they could obtain by their own labour, and sunshine, fresh air and aesthetic delights which nature freely provides, but which it costs so much to make available even in a niggardly measure to the urban industrial workers synthetically. Work will not be the antithesis of life but a means of realising the full content of life—a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. There will be no poverty in essentials amidst a plenty of non-essentials. The needs of the many will not be sacrificed to the privileges of the few or for the abstraction called "national prosperity" and "progress". People will enjoy unrationed freedom. Armed with new skills and techniques that will increase their productive power without curtailing individual freedom; freed from the domination of high finance, high technology and the aristocracy of intellect, they will for the first time take their destiny in their own hands and have an equal opportunity with the tallest in the land to realise the "highest realisable in life".

There is a world of difference between the means for comfort and the standard of comfort achieved. While the means for comfort have increased enormously as a result of mechanical progress, it is questionable whether the same can be said of the standard of comfort achieved for the millions. "We are, in fact, all cluttered up with progress," observes Stuart Chase. In the words of Virgil Jordan, "Prosperity is an overworked word and . . . it has been achieved in part at the expense of the older industries furnishing the basic materials and the fundamental services."[71] Stuart Chase has shown by facts and figures that a good half of the huge pile of raw materials, that goes into the living of an average American family, is wasted in exploitation, another large percentage is lost in the process of manufacture; leaving a balance for final consumption "a high percentage" of which is "worthless junk". It would perhaps have been not "too great a sacrifice", he holds, to have exchanged greater part of this for more wholesome food, more and better clothing and other necessaries of life for the bulk of the population. "We are certainly housed more glitteringly, fed more variously and clothed more diaphanously," he goes on to remark, but "we are not as a nation housed more spaciously, fed more heartily or clothed or shod more voluminously than a generation ago."[72] "Various nature peoples located in regions of abundant food supply have, with fewer material things, probably been more comfortable."[73]

Be that as it may, there is not much sense in aiming at a high living standard if, as a result, the life process itself is undermined.

There is a growing volume of evidence to show that owing to malnutrition due to the rapidly declining soil fertility, sedentary living and consumption of refined and concentrated foods, which act like a stimulant drug; and spread of wrong health behaviour which seems to grow instead of lessening with the spread of "progress", dominant urbanism has been detrimental to "primary human health". The average life-span of man has increased as a result of improvement in the standards of public health and the progress that the science of medicine has made, but the incidence of morbidity due to "modern living" has at the same time increased at such a rate as to cause "the utmost apprehension". Testified Professor Martin Sihle, Director of the University of Medical Clinic of Riga: "Even when we consider the sense organs of our patients, deviation into pathological functioning frequently strikes us. One person is short-sighted, another hears badly, a third has so-called chronic cold . . . lung apices function badly . . . heart is often enlarged. . . . And the organs of digestion? Few men have them in complete working order."[74]

According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, in a group of 1,000 Americans aged 15 and over, there would be found 976 instances of disease or disorder, ranging from "anaemia, obesity, tuberculosis to some 20 additional physical defects and ailments." Out of 14 million young Americans examined for the military draft prior to and during the Second World War, only two million were up to standard. The percentage of increase in the incidence of diabetes in the U.S.A., we are informed, "outaverages the increase in the birth rate"; more than seven million Americans are arthritic; one out of ten healthy American men has a stomach ulcer; one out of six is sterile.[75]

On top of this there come the neuro-psychic complaints, hysteria and neurosis. The report of the Medical Statistics Division of the Office of the Surgeon-General of the United States for 1946 showed that 12 per cent. of the total 15 million men examined in the draft for the U.S. Army in the Second World War were rejected for neuro-psychiatric disorders. In 1945 these disorders accounted for 657,393 or 38 per cent. of all the hospital beds in the country. The total costs and losses due to mental illness in the United States for 1944 were estimated at 1,295 million dollars.[76]

The staggering increase in the production and sale of "tranquilising drugs", "happiness pills" and so on which in some of the most highly industrialised countries in the West exceeds the sale and consumption of all the other pharmaceuticals put together, is another pointer whose significance cannot be missed.

It is a bad economy under which "wealth accumulates and men decay." The daily life of a rural worker is highly educative. A farmer must know about weather, seasons, crops, trees, plants and domestic

and wild animals. A handicraftsman, similarly, must know about woods, metals, clays and textile fibres etc. A rural worker's day-to-day living contact with his environment, testifies Stuart Chase, who is certainly no enemy of mechanical progress, "tends not only to make him wise in a basic sort of way, but to make him courageous, handy, self-reliant, and independent."[77] The daily routine of an urban worker, on the other hand, has no such educational significance. "Survival for him depends upon ability to dodge motor-cars; to read the time tables, warning signals and the labels on packaged foods; upon the use of money and the telephone, the ordering of repair mechanics; and certain details in the general theory of double entry accounting" etc. He may and usually does learn something more but "it seldom has anything to do with the specific conditions of his environment, and has no place in his scheme of survival." As a result, he tends to lack "that self-reliance and handiness, that certain basic wisdom, which are the normal heritage of the pioneer, of the resident in the self-sustaining village."[78] And so we have the curious phenomenon, to which Austin Freeman has drawn attention, that in a given race the continued growth of knowledge may go hand-in-hand with "a generally inferior itelligence".[79] The results of standard I.Q. tests—tests for the quotient of intelligence—in Great Britain and in the U.S.A. point to a lowering by 1 to 2 points on the I.Q. scale for each generation.[80]

It is sometimes argued that the increase in neurasthenia in factory populations is incidental and will be remedied as a result of improvements in industrial conditions. This is not true either in theory or in fact. Indeed, the studies of an eminent doctor of London Hospital, Dr. Culpin, revealed that there was a high rate of neurasthenia in a shop "where working conditions were of the best, and a low rate in a shop where speeding-up and other conditions were far worse."[81] The increase in the incidence of neurosis among modern machine workers seems to have little or no relation to the work or the working environment. It is not an incidental factor, but an "institutional effect" inherent in the character of the work itself.

In the pre-industrial era, when the worker worked in the midst of his family in an agreeable and interesting environment, he was free to adjust and vary his hours of work, rest and play according to his convenience. He was a craftsman, whether working in the field or in the workshop. His activity provided him with variety and change[82] and called for the exercise of his intelligence and skill. He saw products of his labour grow under his hand. His work gave him creative satisfaction. The machine worker cannot see the relation between his labour and the finished product. He has ceased to be a craftsman and become a "hand". He produces nothing; the machine produces everything. He merely tends the machine. A split occurs in the

"psychological unity of work and result". The repetitive nature of his occupation, coupled with the tireless tempo of the machine to which he is geared, engenders a continuous physiological and psychological strain. The result is irritability, discontent and revolt against work. He tries to recapture in play what he is denied in work. But he is so numbed in body and mind at the end of the day that "he has lost the very faculty of playing."[83] Leisure with him becomes "a pervasive emptiness . . . a vacuum, a desperate state of vacancy."[84] All he feels up to is to fill it with passive entertainment, "not playing . . . but watching . . . games; not drama, but theatre-going; not walking, but riding in an automobile."[85] This is the significance of the mushrooming of what has been described as "exhibitionist" art and culture in our times.[86] The total annual cost of various forms of play and diversion of this character for the United States was estimated by Stuart Chase at 21 billions of dollars—"not far from a fourth of the national income."[87] The bulk of this, he points out, is not "recreation" i.e. "creating again in play the balance that has been lost in work" but "decreation" i.e. "compounding the lost balance through unrewarding forms of play."[88] This is a sign not of progress but of incipient decadence and decline as the history of Imperial Rome and other civilisations that have passed away testifies.

The true craftsman "has no leisure but only rest." It is not the "human soul in its freedom," observes Herbert Read, the educationist, but the soul "crowded into cities, cut off from the soil and seasons, (and) deprived of natural alternations of satisfying activities" that craves for expensive entertainments to dissipate its boredom.[89] The modern problem of "leisure" is a symptom of the "vast social neurosis" which is one of the outstanding facts of our time.

All talk of "emancipation from work" opening the gateway to "recreative leisure" which would make cultured existence possible for each and for all is, therefore, sheer nonsense. Work and play must, in the words of Stuart Chase, "move in some sort of integrated balance. If you kill the instinct of workmanship, the play instinct is also killed."[90]

The picture that confronts us today is of "sick man and sick society". An eminent medical authority, Dr. James L. Halliday, M.D., in a recent work of his on psycho-social medicine *A Study of Sick Society* points out that even the science of medicine is today more occupied in its patients with "consequences of a sick society than with bacteria, purely physiological illness or material inadequacies." An important part of present-day illness, he shows, is the consequence of "social disintegration and declining vitality resulting from the way people live." Our social sickness is a reflection of our own psychological sickness. A well integrated community like a well integrated individual is resistant to invasion by unhealthy elements and tends to

throw them out. But when its power of resistance declines, "the psycho-somatic illness becomes increasingly infectious and the community itself becomes sick." "Class-war" and "leadership for destruction" are one of the manifestations of this sickness.

Wars are increasing in their destructiveness, frequency and scope, and this makes the issue of the mental health of man and society a matter of supreme concern. Scientific studies of "street-corner society" have been made, Herbert Read tells us, and they reveal that "it is a society with leisure—that is to say, spare time—and without compensatory occupation" out of which "crime, gangsterdom and fascism inevitably develop."[91] There is a growing class of people today in our midst who are proud of their jobs because of the remuneration and social status it gives them but they hate the very sight of their work. It is they who, to cover "the essential emptiness of boredom of their occupation" give themselves up to the advancement of morbid dreams of ambition and power. Gandhiji, therefore, said that the goal of economic progress should be "human happiness combined with full mental and moral development."[92] In other words, our way of life must be such as would provide us not only with material means of existence but also with satisfying activities. Such activities in the nature of things cannot be "casual, optional activities like sports or games", but "purposeful activities"—activities related to our and society's primary upkeep—and involving not only the exercise of our intelligence and skill but our muscles also. For "muscles have a life of their own unless they are trained to purposeful actions."[93]

Even if this means a little more of physical toil, and sacrifice of some of the urban comforts to which we have become accustomed, it does not matter much. It would mean more life and health and happiness to the millions and it would not be too great a price to pay for peace. There is no truer observation than Read's that "war is a part of the price we pay for mechanised system of production, for comfort and convenience and a higher standard of living."[94]

Fundamental to all consideration of human progress is the question of vitality. Vitality has been defined as "the fund of life and capacity to maintain life accumulated and preserved from generation to generation through our entire physical and cultural inheritance."[95] The course of history, points out Griscom Morgan in his study *Vitality and Civilisation*, "is as much controlled by vitality as it is by politics, economics, or ideas."[96] Time and again in history, sudden, brief bursts of civilisation have been achieved by exploiting the accumulated vital reserves of the people. The result invariably was exhaustion and extinction of such civilisations.

Professor Sorokin has called the village the "producer", the town the "consumer" of populations. Life springs from the soil. Culture

and vitality are born in the village. The city is the place where they are exploited and squandered and where they ultimately die. "The climax of the growth of the city and the developments of the city arts, science and commerce," noted that great traveller, statesman and philosopher of history, Ibn Khaldun, "is the beginning of the decay and degeneration of the city and of the whole of society. . . . *The average curve of the rising and degenerating oj urban families is the space of four generations.*" (Italics mine).

A purely urban society of men has never been known to be able to maintain itself without replenishing its exhausted stock by recruitment from the countryside. This continuous biological exploitation of the country by the town is one of the most significant facts of industrial civilisation.

Contrary to the general belief, it is not the hard toil or material inadequacies that have contributed to the present biological deterioration of industrial populations but the high standard of comfort and soft living which modern progress has made possible. Adversity and physical labour even "compel" the accumulation and conservation of vital powers. "When most people could not live actively after the sun had set, and winter months forced much inactivity, nature contributed to the conservation of vitality."[97] But when a man can see no meaning in his occupation and returns home after a hard day's work with his thwarted creative instinct in full revolt, he is led to seek relief in all kinds of distractions which drain him of his vital energy.[98] The needs of parenthood, family life and community responsibility on which the survival of a civilisation depends are neglected.

The true criterion of the achievement of a nation or a civilisation is not its production statistics but its power to last. As a result of making human values subservient to economic progress, we are warned, there is taking place today in Western society "a dissipation of human resources which may have decisive effect on our destiny."[99] In this both capitalism and Communism are equally guilty. "Having the common man at their mercy both exploit vital powers ruthlessly to achieve the tremendous works of civilisation. The cost in terms of the future is not counted."[100]

The evidence of the skeletal remains from civilisations that have passed away shows that growth of urbanism, commercialism, decay of farming and consumption of imported food stuffs resulting in the prevalence of certain "diseases of civilisation" such as bad teeth, rheumatism, gouts, etc. invariably heralded the decline of those civilisations. As anybody who runs can see, these warning signals are not wanting in our midst today. We can ignore the writing on the wall only at our peril.

8

Democracy is today facing a crisis. There is a contradiction between democracy and abundance, equality and individual freedom, progress and peace. Cutting across all cracies and isms looms the problem of privilege. Under democracy it appears as a monopoly of the means of production and distribution, under dictatorship as a monopoly of political power, and in both as a monopoly of intellect, technological knowledge and specialised experience. Form changes but the inequality remains. Unrestrained individualism breeds inequalities. If we try to remove inequalities by State interference, freedom itself goes under.

Democracy has been defined as "a system of Government in which every adult citizen is equally free to express his views and desires" and "to influence . . . his fellow citizens to decide according to those views and to implement those desires."[101] Freedom, however, is not a "mere catalogue of abstract rights", it must also include the ability to take advantage of and freely exercise these rights.

Present-day forms of democracy were by and large evolved when the doctrines of free enterprise and the inevitability of progress ruled supreme: "Man's self-interest is God's providence" (Malthus); Economic freedom was a law of God, "eternal and immutable" (Cobden and Bright); "By each man following his own individual interest with the minimum of restriction, the public wealth would be best promoted" (Adam Smith). Progress was the key to abundance, and free enterprise the key to progress. Riches, it was argued, can preen its feathers over poverty but not over universal wealth. Science and industry would insure abundance for all. With no spectre of poverty or insecurity to exploit, exploitation would by itself cease; the very motive for domination would go; prestige would be sought in other and possibly nobler channels, and the era of democracy and permanent peace at last dawn upon earth.

Glaring economic inequalities and other evils of unrestrained competition under capitalistic individualism have since caused the pendulum to swing in the opposite direction and the necessity of State action to mitigate these evils has come to be universally recognised. But experience has shown that once the State begins to interfere it is led, by the very logic of its action, to regulate more and more of the people's lives and activities, and those who stand for democratic values, faced with "the competitive efficiency of their totalitarian rivals", are forced either to "adopt totalitarian methods of control" or else, "by clinging to outworn democratic forms . . . yield position after position."[102]

This is the significance of the emergence of totalitarianism that the world has of late witnessed. In the words of Gerald Heard: "The intense and savage regimentation of the Totalitarian States is simply the contractive reflex of peoples too long exposed to private and general futility. The goose step is no more than an attempt to shake off that goose flesh feeling."[103]

At the root of it all lies our false standard of values. Whilst it is a truism that democracy and freedom cease to have any meaning to a people who lacks the elementary necessaries of life, it is not less true that hankering more and more after worldly goods becomes a hindrance to democracy and can only be satisfied at the cost of individual freedom.

The system of mass production, which a desire to have more and more of material goods has brought into being, has created a "baffling vastness" in society in which the individual gets lost. Far-flung markets have been created for goods which are produced at one end to be consumed at the other. Price mechanism and fluctuations of exchange have become mysterious and incomprehensible to any but the specialist. The same about technology. We have the testimony of Stuart Chase that "there is . . . an alarming shrinkage in the average man's understanding of the technology which shelters, clothes and feeds him. Technical achievement and public ignorance of its implications are tending to move with equal velocity in opposite directions."[104] The average individual who has to work for a living for himself and his family has neither the time nor the special training to study or understand the intricacies of the industrial and economic structure which surrounds him or its working. He finds himself placed, as it were, on a conveyor belt on whose smooth running his continued existence depends. He must cooperate willy-nilly to keep it going or be lost. He can exercise very little real control over it; his initiative counts for nothing. He has to let his thinking be done by others. A new ruling class of powerful executives in an individualistic order and of politicians, planners, specialists and bureaucrats under planned economy thus springs up. Privilege returns under a new face. Equality is sacrificed to the pursuit of abundance. It is a disquieting feature of the technological age that personal liberty has come to be "less and less valued" by the population at large.[105]

Gandhiji did not despise economic progress. On the contrary he went so far as to say that to the starving God can appear only as bread and butter. "For the poor the economic is the spiritual.[106] Talk to them of modern progress. Insult them by taking the name of God before them in vain. They will call you and me fiends if we talk about God to them. They know, if they know any God at all, a God of terror, vengeance, a pitiless tyrant."[107] Nobody did more than he, in his own way, to provide to the masses a little more of the material means of life. Only he refused to make the multiplication of material

wants the sole criterion of progress, or to put the material before the moral when there was a conflict between the two.

As with the economic so with the technological. Life in a highly modern city depends upon a series of vital services. The failure of any one of these can make the people in their homes feel as helpless as a rat in a poisoned hole and, unless quickly restored, turn the whole city into a sepulchre. The failure of electric power would plunge every home in darkness. Telephones, transport, elevators, lifts, milk and food supplies, even water supply and air circulation, would suddenly collapse. Stuart Chase's grim picture is not overdrawn: "Some day an embittered labour movement, or even a small key labour group, may really cut a nerve. Some day a struggle between two business groups may cut a nerve. Some day an earthquake may cut a lot of them—a quake which would not do appreciable damage in a village."[108] "Who understands the technological functioning of these services, and their interlocking relationships?" he asks, "where are the men . . . where is the central intelligence to nurse a great city through a nervous breakdown?" and answers: "Nowhere. . . . The problems involved are far too complicated to be grasped by any one mind, or by any small group."[109] The number of men required to paralyse the life of a whole city, we are told on good authority, need not exceed "a minute fraction of one per cent. of the population."[110] Growing specialisation, and dependence upon electric power, imported fuels and imported food-stuffs are fast destroying the community self-sufficiency even in the countryside, and with that the capacity of the common man to stand up for his democratic rights. There can be no real freedom of choice or of action where so many subsist on the sufferance of so few.

The structure of democracy and peace cannot be raised on a foundation of such economic and technological tenuousness. Nations that depend upon food supplies from outside, live under the constant fear that their life-lines might be severed by some unfriendly foreign power. This creates among the people a feeling of insecurity, a psychology of fear which dictators and war-mongers can in a crisis easily exploit to create mass hysteria so that jettisoning their long cherished ideals the people become willing to sacrifice their personal freedom to wartime totalitarian efficiency and allow themselves to be led to slaughter and to be slaughtered like robots. Advance of technology has thus actually resulted in a decline of individual freedom. The average individual, confronted with the choice between the loss of individual or national security and semi-servitude, for the most part chooses the latter. And so, in the words of Aldous Huxley, "On many fronts nature has been conquered; but . . . man and his liberties have sustained a succession of defeats."[111]

In the final resort, the only sure guarantee of a people's liberties

is their capacity to resist injustice and wrong. "Only the most ingeniously optimistic, the most wilfully blind to the facts of history and psychology," observes Aldous Huxley, "can believe that paper guarantees of liberty—guarantees wholly unsupported by the realities of political and economic power—will be scrupulously respected by those who have known only the facts of Governmental omnipotence on the one hand and, on the other, of mass dependence upon, and consequently subservience to, the State and its representatives."[112] The real test of independence, said Gandhiji, was that the common man should have "the consciousness . . . that he is the maker of his own destiny."[113] Real independence would come not "by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused . . . by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority."[114]

Traditional democracy recognises the inherent right of the people even to violent rebellion against authority when the democratic machinery is abused. But advance of technology has put in the hands of small groups and bodies of men a terrific concentration of power. Those who control the machinery of the State are consequently today armed with far more effective instruments of coercion with which to put down popular resistance than their predecessors ever had before. They also control all the means of mass communication—the Press, the radio and the cinema, by which to hypnotise the masses and condition their thinking. The people have nothing comparable at their disposal with which to counter these. Such sanctions as they once had have been rendered obsolete and ineffective by the march of technology.

As a result, where democratic machinery is non-existent or may have been suppressed or otherwise broken down, the people are left without any effective mode of redress. Their only hope lies in the possibility of offering resistance on a plane where technological superiority does not count. This can only be by non-violent resistance or Satyagraha. "The British have arms," Gandhiji once said, "while we have not. We must, therefore, give fight on a plane where we can use our weapons while they cannot" i.e. by non-violent non-cooperation and Satyagraha. But one pre-condition of successful Satyagraha by the people at large—apart from the cultivation of the basic spiritual disciplines by the leaders of Satyagraha and non-violent organisation of the rank and file by intelligent, purposive and consciously directed constructive activity—is that at least a fair number of them should be able to eke out a subsistence, without depending upon big capitalists, big employers or "the all-embracing employer — the State." This requires that they should have free access to the land and be possessed of many skills so that in a crisis they will not be coerced into submission for lack of the means of livelihood for themselves and their dependents.

Gandhiji, therefore, advocated a return to spiritual values, a

radical simplification of the mechanics of living and reorganisation of society on the basis of small, manageable, autonomous units in which rural communities, regionally self-sufficient in respect of their basic needs, would wield effective political power. "It is in regionalism," observes Wilfred Wellock, "that man is destined to realise his maximum freedom. Regionalism has indeed become an urgent necessity, and indispensable condition of achieving and maintaining individual freedom and a human society."[115] "My idea of village Swaraj," wrote Gandhiji,

> is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. . . . Then if there is more land available, it will grow *useful* money crops, thus excluding *ganja*, tobacco, opium and the like. . . . As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the cooperative basis. . . . Non-violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The Government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. . . . Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own Government. The law of non-violence rules him and his Government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour.[116]

This, however, does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. "It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces."[117]

> In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore *the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it.* . . . No-one . . . (will) be the first and none the last.[118] (Italics mine).

Such a society, maintained Gandhiji, "is necessarily highly cultured."[119] In it "every man and woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no-one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour."[120]

Finally, this society "must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which . . . are not possible without living belief in God, meaning a self-existent, all-knowing living Force which inheres every other force known to the world and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act."[121]

G. D. H. Cole is credited with having once made the remark that he doubted whether the common man in England was capable of maintaining effective democracy in any unit larger than a parish or an urban district council. If we are to have any kind of human rule, observes Lord Northbourne, to preserve individual freedom, not to lose it, it can only be based on the existence of "small, manageable, sound primary units, in themselves coherent and self-contained, which can be built up into large units, in their turn coherent and self-contained."[122]

A dynamic democracy can grow only out of meaningful relationships and spontaneous organisation that spring up among the people, when they come together at the local level to solve their basic problems by cooperation among themselves. In such a community achievement of self-sufficiency and security by neighbourly cooperation engenders a strong sense of local strength and solidarity, and the individual's sense of responsibility to the community and concern for its welfare are at their highest. "Concern for large scale affairs on the regional or national and international levels by individuals and groups cannot be vital and lasting," points out Clyde E. Murry, an American expert on community development, "unless it is based on active participation in local problems. If the people are apathetic and are not closely related to one another on the local levels, it is well-nigh impossible to have a dynamic democracy on the broader scene."[123]

The foundations of democracy are today crumbling under the impact of applied technology. If democracy is to survive the challenge with which it is faced and not to go under, its foundations must be re-established. These foundations are (1) a conscious recovery of individuality and "the recognising of the body by a mind repossessed of vision", (2) a social environment readjusted to man's measure, in which human personality shall find full expression, and (3) an intellectual

understanding of the universal in the framework of man's relationships with other forms of life both animate and inanimate.

The framework appropriate to the capacity of the individual, observes Albert Gleizes, "the framework in which the '*common man*' is not submerged and can take an interest in the part assigned to him because it gives scope for initiative and personal influence, is '*the village*'. . . . This is the legitimate Fatherland . . . non-aggressive and suited to the stature of normal man." For this reason, he tells us, "it is the imperative duty of the elect to recreate the village in body and soul."[124]

9

Would this not mean a rejection of technology and fruits of progress? "You would not industrialise India?" Gandhiji was once asked.

He replied: "I would, indeed, in my sense of the term."

"You would then go back to the natural economy?"

"Yes. . . . But I am industrialising the village in a different way."[125]

What would be the place of the machine in this? "I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all," said Gandhiji.[126] "Every machine that helps every individual has a place."[127] But there would be no place in this for machines that would displace human labour and concentrate power in a few hands. "Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family."[128]

What he objected to was not machinery as such but its indiscriminate multiplication. He refused to be dazzled by "the seeming triumph of machinery. . . . Simple tools and instruments and such machinery as saves individual labour and lightens the burden of the millions of cottagers, I should welcome."[129]

In other words, as he once explained to a young inquirer, it was "the craze for machinery" to which he was opposed. "The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. . . . I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all; I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might."[130]

"Then you are fighting not against machinery as such but against its abuses which are so much in evidence today?" he was questioned.

"I would unhesitatingly say 'yes', " he replied, "but I would add that scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be mere

instruments of greed. Then labourers will not be over-worked and machinery instead of becoming a hindrance will be a help. I am aiming, not at eradication of all machinery, but its limitation."[131]

In answer to a further question whether logically argued out, this would not seem to imply that all complicated power-driven machinery should go, he admitted that it might have to go. "But I must make one thing clear. The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man. . . . The individual is the one supreme consideration. The saving of labour of the individual should be the object, and honest humanitarian considerations, and not greed, the motive."[132]

Profit-making and human exploitation being eliminated, Gandhiji said, people would be free to introduce such machines as might be necessary to make the village community self-contained and to increase production, provided it was "mainly for use" and not for exploitation of others. So long as this condition was adhered to, "there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use."[133] He would make "intelligent exceptions". Take for instance the Singer sewing machine. "It is one of the few useful things ever invented. . . . Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hands, and simply out of his love for her he devised the sewing machine. . . . He . . . saved not only her labour but also the labour of everyone who could purchase a sewing machine."[134] Similarly, printing presses would continue, and we would need bicycles and surgical instruments. "How can one make them with one's hands? Heavy machinery would be needed for them."[135] Similarly, the "heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour" would have its "inevitable place".[136] But he was "socialist enough", said Gandhiji to insist that all such heavy industries employing large numbers of people should be "nationalised or State-controlled" and worked for the benefit of the people "under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit, but for the benefit of humanity."[137]

The level of machinery and organisation that the community might adopt in such society would vary from time to time and from place to place according to the varying needs of the people, the standard of living aimed at and changing circumstances. The guiding principle would always be that the introduction of costly and complicated machines or processes must not impair the self-sufficiency of the community and they should be within the mental reach and comprehension of the people. The machines should further be within their financial capacity to own individually or collectively.

Hardly less important than self-sufficiency in food is regional self-sufficiency in respect of power. As Aldous Huxley has pointed out,

the discovery of new sources of unlimited power involving a terrific capital outlay or the use of raw materials to which only a few can have access would, instead of making for democracy, liberty and peace, only accentuate the already existing international rivalries and domination of the weak by the strong, as illustrated by the big powers' race for oil and the ugly portent of "oil diplomacy" in the Middle East. Nuclear energy would make matters still worse.

Being myself very much taken up with the idea of the electrification of the villages, I tried several times during our last detention in Poona to canvass Gandhiji's support for electrification. If electricity could be made equally available in every cottage, Gandhiji had said before, in theory at least there would be no objection to the village industries being run by electricity. "But then the village communities or the State would own power-houses, just as they have their grazing pastures."[138] Agriculture stood on a different footing. For reasons already explained and more to follow power-driven machinery can have very little use, if any, in agriculture under the economy of permanence. It seems, however, that Gandhiji regarded the proviso which he had attached to his assent as a "counsel of perfection". I never could get him to enthuse over the idea of electrification. He attached the utmost importance to the conditions with which he had hedged his assent, he said, and was afraid that they would conveniently be ignored by the enthusiasts for electricity. Perhaps he also felt that once electricity obtained a foothold in the villages, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to confine its use within any pre-set limit. For instance, if electricity was used for lighting and cooking, why not for irrigation, for grinding corn, for husking rice, or for pressing oil from the oil seeds? Again, could electrification of five hundred thousand villages of India be achieved without bringing in all-round heavy industrialisation and without the whole economy of the self-contained village being affected? The utmost that with all my pleadings I could get him to concede was that it was for those who had faith in electrification to remove his misgivings and demonstrate that the electrification of the villages could be effected without the weakest going to the wall. So far as he was concerned he had more than enough to do, he said, with the things that he had already on hand.

The natural tendency in a society from which exploitation and profiteering have been eliminated would be, said Gandhiji, *to substitute handicrafts for machinery for whatever can be done better by hand and gives to the worker a healthy and satisfying form of an occupation.* There is practically no limit to the development of higher skills latent in the human hand, or to increasing the efficiency of implements in use, to step up production. Even a minute increment in individual production secured in this way when multiplied millions of times would mean a far greater net increase in the national wealth than what

could be obtained by spending millions in the erection of colossal power plants. If, after all human and cattle labour has been fully utilised, something more remains to be done, it would be open to the people to use mechanical power to the extent that they felt necessary. Suppose, for instance, a village community or a group of villages wanted to build a road, a dam, or a reservoir, or to do contour bunding for soil conservation, it would be open to them to consider whether or what machinery or labour-saving devices they would use to set free labour needed for the completion of the works in question. The essential condition is that the people themselves should decide.

The natural order of preference in this set up would be to utilise in the first place the energy of the wind, the water, the tides and the sunshine. Imported electric or fuel power would be used only in the last resort. Thus they would freely use sewage gas prepared from human and animal waste, if this could be economically done in the villages, and solar cookers, solar batteries, wind mills and water-mills, provided they served to supplement and did not displace human and cattle labour, or tend to increase the dependence of the village on the town.

Agriculture in this set up will go hand in hand with industry. Such products of the village as enter into the daily consumption of the villagers or are needed for their cottage crafts will be processed in the village itself; the surplus alone being sent out to the cities in exchange for services and goods on a fair and equitable basis. Cities will serve as emporia for village products instead of the villages being used as a dumping ground for the manufactured goods of the cities. Machines will not be abolished. On the contrary, the people will have many more of them. But these machines will be simple machines which the people can themselves operate and own individually or collectively. Society will be composed of small manageable units, co-operatively knit together. It will be a world which the common man can understand and therefore effectively control. The frontiers of this little world might be narrower but the bounds of freedom will be enlarged. Commerce and industry in this set up will be ancillary to agriculture instead of agriculture being ancillary to them.

"As a moderately intelligent man," Gandhiji once remarked clarifying his attitude on the use of science and machinery, "I know that man cannot live without industry. Therefore, I cannot be opposed to industrialisation. But I have a great concern about introducing machine industry. The machine produces much too fast, and brings with it a sort of economic system which I cannot grasp. I do not want to accept something when I see its evil effects which outweigh whatever good it brings with it. *I want the dumb millions of our land to be healthy and happy, and I want them to grow spiritually. As yet for this purpose we do not need the machine.* There are many, too many idle

hands. But as we grow in understanding, if we feel the need of machines, we certainly will have them. We want industry, let us become industrious. Let us become more self-dependent, then we will not follow the other people's lead so much. We shall introduce machines if and when we need them. Once we have shaped our life on Ahimsa, we shall know how to control the machine."[139] (Italics mine).

During his visit to England in 1931, at the end of a series of searching questions by an American Press correspondent, Gandhiji was asked: "So you are opposed to machinery only because and when it concentrates production and distribution in the hands of the few?"

"You are right," answered Gandhiji. "I hate privilege and monopoly. Whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me. That is all."[140]

Modern science has two aspects—the educative or fundamental and the economic or the technological. In its fundamental aspect, science has been an educative and liberating force, which has set free truth from the shackles of dogma. This aspect of science Gandhiji personified as perhaps no other living person. None strove harder than he to cultivate that intellectual integrity, that habit of dispassionate inquiry into and search for objective truth—as against a fanatical assertion of the truth of one's own dogma—which the discipline of science demands, or to inculcate on the people at large the habit of a scientific approach to every thing in life. He described the spinning-wheel as "science reduced to the terms of the masses". In its economic aspect, he looked upon it as the means *par excellence* of overcoming the mental inertia of the masses and of quickening their intelligence and inventive faculty. At the beginning of the non-cooperation movement, when millions had taken to the spinning-wheel and the allied processes, and everybody from the oldest village dame to the tiniest tot plying his *Takli* or carding bow, was busy thinking how to improve them, he once exultantly remarked : "Never has the spirit of invention been more briskly at work among the common people than now." I can never forget how his whole countenance beemed and his eyes glistened as he uttered that remark.

Henry Ford, in his personal memoir *My Life and Work*, has recorded how once when he received an order for tractors from one country, he sent trucks instead. "It was to make the people speed-minded," he explained. Once they became time conscious, he could count upon their wanting many more tractors. And the result proved that he was right. In the wake of the trucks came a much bigger order for tractors than he had originally received. It was Gandhiji's anticipation that the resuscitation of the spinning-wheel with all that it implies would inaugurate a new revolution in technology which would give birth to a series of inventions as marvellous as those that made the industrial revolution but of a different order. They would

reverse the evil effects of the industrial revolution.

Suppose, observes Aldous Huxley, it becomes the acknowledged purpose of inventors and engineers to use applied science to provide the common folk with the means of "doing profitable and intrinsically significant work, of helping men and women to achieve independence from bosses, so that they may become their own employers, or members of a self-governing, cooperative group working for subsistence and a local market." Backed by appropriate legislation, "this differently orientated technological progress" would result in "a progressive decentralisation of population, of accessibility of land, of ownership of the means of production, of political and economic power." In addition there would be "the social advantages of a more humanly satisfying life for more people, a greater measure of genuine self-governing democracy and a blessed freedom from the silly or pernicious adult education provided by the mass producers of consumer goods through the medium of advertisements."[141] Science too would gain thereby. Scientific progress is hindered when science is commercialised.

Science and technology have hitherto been used by and large to subserve the interest of entrenched power—big industry, big finance, the sophisticated town folk. The villager—the peasant, the handicraftsman and the artisan—has benefited by it only incidentally. It was Gandhiji's aim to bring down science and technology from the mountain tops to the plains where common folk dwell so as to give to the masses—the small producer, the breaker of the soil and the handicraftsman plying his craft in his cottage their full benefit.

10

Ever since the shift of emphasis in the Congress from non-violent direct action to "political activity", Gandhiji had noted with deep concern the growing dominance of the town over the village. Real India, he had again and again proclaimed, was to be found "not in its few cities but in its seven hundred thousand villages. But we . . . town-dwellers have believed that India is to be found in its towns and the villages were created to minister to our needs."[142]

The villager had suffered long from neglect by those who had the benefit of education. The intelligentsia had chosen city-life. The town-dweller had "generally exploited the villager, in fact he has lived on the poor villager's subsistence."[143] Once India's villages produced and supplied to the Indian towns and cities all their wants. "India became impoverished when our cities became foreign markets and began to drain the villages dry by dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign lands."[144]

It had become the fashion to dub the villager as "ignorant and narrow-minded". Gandhiji challenged those who talked like that to go and live on the diet on which millions of villagers live. "We should not expect to survive it longer than a month or should be afraid of losing our mental faculties."[145] And yet the villager went through that state day after day and year after year. The only way in which the intelligentsia could expiate for the grievous wrong they had done to the villager by their past neglect, said Gandhiji, was by encouraging the villagers to revive their lost industries and arts by assuring them of a ready market. "Only when the cities realise the duty of making an adequate return to the villages for the strength and sustenance which they derive from them, instead of selfishly exploiting them, that a healthy and moral relationship between the two will spring up."[146]

Industrialism has in the past depended upon its ability to exploit sources of cheap raw materials, and foreign markets to dispose of the surplus of manufactured goods in the absence of competitors.[147] It was all very well at the beginning of the race for industrialism for countries that had a running start to aspire to become the workshop of the world. But with rapid awakening coming over all parts of the world, growing trade rivalries and the rise of their own home industries in one country after another, Gandhiji warned, this would not be found to be so easy by the new entrants who would find themselves up against old established rivals in the race for industrialisation. Anyway, for a country like India, where the problem was not how to find leisure for the teeming millions in her villages but how to utilise their idle hours, there was no need to industrialise:

> Why must India become industrial in the Western sense? The Western civilisation is urban. Small countries like England or Italy may afford to urbanise their systems. A big country like America with very sparse population, perhaps, cannot do otherwise. But one would think that a big country, with a teeming population with an ancient rural tradition which has hitherto answered its purpose, need not, must not copy the Western model. What is good for one nation situated in one condition is not necessarily good for another differently situated. One man's food is often another man's poison. . . . Mechanisation is good when hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil where there are more hands than required for the work as is the case in India.[148]

Gandhiji was afraid that India, if she became heavily industrialised, would inevitably be driven to exploitation and become a "curse for other nations, a menace to the world".[149] The tendency to

over-production is inherent in the industrial system. The more highly developed a machine and costlier to instal, the greater is the compulsion to utilise its full potential for production, irrespective of demand. For even if it is kept idle, the interest on the huge capital outlay continues to accumulate. The industry must, therefore, either undersell, or find fresh markets to dispose of the surplus. Trade rivalries and struggle for markets resulting from this lead to international conflict and expansionism. The flag follows the trade. Ultimately a country's foreign policy is determined not by the ideals it blazons or the slogans it shouts but by the inexorable logic of its production system. "God forbid," exclaimed Gandhiji, "that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts."[150]

And what applies to India applies equally to the other densely populated countries of the world.

It has sometimes been argued that it is not industrialism but the capitalistic system that is the cause of exploitation. Under a socialistic economy, industrialisation would be used only for the service of the masses—to emancipate them from the slavery of toil—not for exploitation of anybody. Gandhiji did not share that view. "Pandit Nehru wants industrialisation," he remarked, "because he thinks that if it is socialised, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialisation can eradicate them."[151]

Today we find highly industrialised States—whether capitalist, Socialist, or Communist—all vying with one another in extending their industrial domain. Under capitalism and Socialism this takes the form of "economic imperialism", colonialism, and acquisition of "dependencies" and "mandated territory", under Communism it comes under the guise of "satellite States". In fact there is no form of exploitation so ruthless and more to be dreaded than exploitation of a country by the whole working class of another in pursuit of a higher standard of living. "You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilisation," warned Gandhiji, "but it can be built on self-contained villages. . . . Rural economy, as I have conceived it, eschews exploitation altogether, and exploitation is the essence of violence. You have, therefore, to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent, and to be rural-minded you have to have faith in the spinning-wheel."[152] And again: "Society based on non-violence can only consist of groups settled in villages in which voluntary cooperation is the condition of dignified and peaceful existence."[153]

After a long discussion with Gandhiji on the subject of village

industries a Polish friend remarked: "Gandhiji is more radical than Socialists. They are against the worker being exploited; Gandhiji is not only against this, but also against the worker exploiting others."[154]

In the place of industrialisation Gandhiji wanted India to evolve a system of economy based on what he called "non-violent occupations". A non-violent occupation he defined as that occupation which is "fundamentally free from violence" and which involves "no exploitation or envy of others".[155] There was a time, he believed, when Indian village economics were based on non-violent occupations. Those who engaged in such occupations did earn their living but the essential basis of these occupations was service of society. The emphasis was not on rights but on duties. In other words, the service motive rather than the profit motive was the basis of society. (See Vol. I, page 548). Body labour was at the core of these occupations and there was no large-scale machinery. This system of economy was essentially non-exploiting. "For when a man is content to own only so much land as he can till with his own labour, he cannot exploit others. Handicrafts exclude exploitation and slavery."[156]

There could be injustice even in this system but it could be "reduced to a minimum. . . . There was more lustre in people's eyes, and more life in their limbs. . . . It was a life founded on unconscious Ahimsa."[157] "It was very crude," Gandhiji admits. "I know that there was in it no non-violence of my definition and conception. But the germ was there." The "nearest approach to civilisation based upon non-violence" was, he maintained, "the erstwhile village republic of India."[158]

Gandhiji defined the Swaraj of his dreams as a Swaraj in which the necessaries of life would be enjoyed by the poor "in common with those enjoyed by the Princes and moneyed men."[159] This did not mean, he explained, that they should have "palaces" like the Princes. "They are not necessary for happiness. You or I would be lost in them. But you ought to get all the ordinary amenities of life that a rich man enjoys."[160] As the old homely English saying goes, "Enough is as good as a feast." Gandhiji wanted the constitution for India and for that matter for the whole world to be such that "no-one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet."[161] And this ideal, he held, can be universally realised "*only if the means of production of elementary necessaries of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are, or ought to be; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others.*"[162] (Italics mine).

This was the socialistic pattern of society—not in blind imitation of the West, but in accordance with India's ancient tradition and culture and suited to the temperament and genius of her people—which

Gandhiji wanted India to realise.[163] And it was his firm view that, so far at least as India was concerned, there was no quicker way of realising this in the immediate future without the sacrifice of democratic values than a decentralised social and economic order based upon autonomous village communities of peasant-craftsmen, enjoying regional self-sufficiency in respect of their basic needs such as once obtained in our country.

11

Democracy is a plant of slow growth. It needs patience, peace, stability and staying power. Translated in terms of the millions, its essential ingredients are food, clothing, shelter, health and individual freedom. Mere political democracy without economic independence and equal distribution can only prove a snare and an illusion.

To take up food first, in spite of all the wonderful discoveries that have been made in the science of agriculture—labour-saving machines which enable one person to do the work of many, new fertilisers, and insecticides, and new and hardier strains of crops which thrive on soils and in climates that were formerly considered to be too uncongenial—our food supplies are not keeping pace with the increasing population taken the world over, and the danger of world starvation can by no means be dismissed.

Population control is undoubtedly the ultimate solution.[164] But whatever may be the method of choice for population control, one thing is clear. It must go hand in hand with a system of economy that would enable the maximum population to be maintained on the available acreage in health and reasonable comfort for the longest period of time without impairment of soil fertility. It can be shown that the system that is best suited for this is that of intensive individual farming based on cattle and human economy as a way of life, supplemented by cottage industries, as against large-scale, collective, mechanised farming ancillary to heavy industrialisation.

In agriculture, observes F. Baade, "if only because production is bound to the soil, large-scale undertakings can never acquire the same superiority as in industry."[165] The small undertaking possesses certain advantages which the large one lacks. For instance, on a large farm paid labour is more expensive and difficult to supervise. The achievements of the large undertaking "can for the most part be made quite readily available also for the peasant farm."[166] Contrary to what Marx thought, therefore, the balance of advantage in regard to "scientific prolific cultivation" lies not with the "capitalist farmer" but the small holder engaged in family farming. "Whenever it is a question of intensive farming, of personal care of animals, and so on, large-scale

undertakings dependent on paid labour must always find it difficult to compete with peasant production in a free market."[167] That is why, F. Baade concludes, the "demand for family farming has continued unabated even in the West."[168]

The same is borne out by the data for Chinese intensive agriculture given in John Lossing Buck's *Land Utilisation in China.* Although the return from the land, Buck points out, begins to diminish when the size of the farm is below 4 or 5 acres, the total yield continues to increase even after that until the size of the holding touches 2.6 acres. After that it begins gradually to diminish.[169] But even when the size of holdings falls below that mark, "the decrease in yield per acre, and hence in total yield, is less than the drop in production per man." The peasant, therefore, still finds it worthwhile to stick to the land. In a densely populated country, therefore, it is advantageous to adopt subsistence farming as a way of life and work the land "intensively, even far down the scale of diminishing returns, in order to provide enough . . . food for the entire population."[170]

Prince Kropotkin has in his *Fields, Factories and Workshops* showed, on the basis of experiments which he himself had conducted, what unbelievable results could be achieved by individual, intensive, small-scale agriculture. F. H. King, the great American authority on agricultural physics and soil management has similarly recorded in his *Farmers of Forty Centuries* how in China, Korea and Japan conservative economy in agriculture had made it possible after twenty and perhaps thirty or even forty centuries for their soils "to produce sufficiently for the maintenance of such dense populations as are living now in these countries." Almost every day, he tells us, he and his colleagues were "instructed, surprised and amazed" at the conditions and practices which confronted them whichever way they turned; "instructed in ways and extent to which these nations for centuries have been and are conserving and utilising their natural resources, surprised at the magnitude of the returns they are getting from their fields."[171]

And these are the practices they found in vogue: "Both soil and sub-soil are carried into the villages and there between the intervals when needed, they are, at the expense of great labour, composted with organic refuse and often afterwards dried and pulverised before being carried back and used on the fields as home-made fertilisers. Manure of all kinds, human and animal, is religiously saved and supplied to the fields in a manner which secures an efficiency far above our own practices." With regard to the economic value of this human waste, King wrote: "The International Concession of the City of Shanghai in 1908 sold to a Chinese contractor the privilege of entering residences and public places early in the morning of each day in the year and removing the night-soil, receiving therefor more than $31,000 gold, for 78,000 tons of waste."

The total manureal value of the night-soil in India has been calculated at 230 crores of rupees. India's enormous cattle wealth was similarly estimated to yield 900 crores worth of manure annually. Even if 25 per cent. of this could be conserved, the total manure recoverable from the human and animal waste in India would be worth 280 crores of rupees.

Given a proper land system,[172] said Gandhiji, conservative subsistence farming could enable us to maintain out of our own resources all our population even with the present rate of increase for a good long time to come, provided we were prepared to forego for the time being some of the trimmings of "progress" and to put first things first. He accordingly made the proper disposal of night-soil by composting the foundation of his reconstruction schemes beginning with his Ashram. The erection of trench or pit latrines and scavenging was an essential part of the daily Ashram routine and of the apprenticeship which every novice went through.

Large-scale, mechanised, monoculture with the help of artificial fertilisers brings down paper costs. It makes procurement easy and enables it to be increased to capacity. Under it the yield per worker employed on the land goes up. A subsistence farmer, on the other hand, pays individual attention to each plant according to its need like a gardener. The machine cannot do that. It cannot discriminate. The maximum yield per unit the area under subsistence farming is, therefore, higher than under any other system[173] and higher by far when measured in terms of the primary well-being of the common man—the health and vitality it confers on the workers engaged in it and to the population it serves. One is exploitative, the other conservative. One makes for quick superficial abundance followed by rapid exhaustion of the soil, the other for stability and permanence.

In the alternative, suppose half the population were withdrawn from the land and employed in industry to relieve the pressure on the land. The production from the land, according to the data of Elmer Pendell, would be only about 68 per cent. of what it was when the farm holdings were 5.5 acres per man. The result would be that if the ratio of population to food were such that 68 per cent. would satisfactorily feed the whole population, rural and industrial combined, the plan would work out well, "assuming that the factory products could be sold year after year." But if 68 per cent. were not enough to go round for the entire population, it would mean starvation for everybody concerned unless "the industrial products of the factories could be used to buy food from other countries."[174] The chances for this, however, are precarious. Apart from the uncertainty of being able to sell manufactured goods in foreign markets in the face of growing competition, the food supplies from surplus producing countries available for export are fast decreasing owing to the continuous natural increase in

the world's population. To adopt the expedient of rapid industrialisation for reducing the pressure on the land and increasing the people's standard of living would thus be a hazardous gamble to say the least.

It will thus be seen that intensive, small-scale, diversified farming as a way of life, supported by supplementary cottage crafts is the most reliable and most effective way of feeding and maintaining in health the maximum population on land. It alone can consummate "a marriage between industry and agriculture", provide the diversification of occupations that India needs so that agriculture does not become a "gamble in the monsoon", and weld the producer and the consumer into a common association instead of their being banded into unions with conflicting interests, as happens when agriculture is sought to be propped up by such palliatives alone as agricultural cooperatives, rural credit, and marketing facilities. But procurement under this system is not so easy and it is not suited to bulk handling of the produce for commercial purposes. There is also under it the possibility of fierce resistance by the peasantry if there is tactless or undue interference with their way of life in pursuance of preconceived theories, or if they are given a raw deal to favour the urban at the cost of the agrarian. Naturally, this system is not popular with money-hungry professional planners and advocates of controlled economy.

12

As an integral part of subsistence farming based on cattle and human economy is the question of handicrafts and supplementary cottage industries. Farming is not a self-sufficient occupation anywhere. Subsistence farming cannot engage the cultivator and his family all the year round. It needs supplementary cottage occupations to sustain it. In a country like ours, further, where agriculture and health of the soil depend upon the maintenance of a proper balance between the cattle population and the human population, preservation of the cattle wealth becomes a basic need. And in order that this may be economically feasible, both human and cattle population have to be multi-purpose. The alternative is to slaughter the cattle as soon as they otherwise become uneconomical to keep. This the prevailing religious sentiment in this country will not permit. The cattle that turn the soil must, therefore, also fertilise it; and when they are not engaged in agriculture, thrash and grind the corn, turn the oil-presses, lift the sub-soil water, and provide transport. Similarly, the human population must engage in processing their field produce, and practise handicrafts and other cottage occupations when they are not engaged in agriculture. This, if intelligently done, said Gandhiji, would also develop their mental faculties so that in the constant company of the oxen, they would not

grow up into the likeness of Markham's "brother to the ox".

This in its turn means that both human and cattle population in the villages must be protected from the competition of mechanical power. Cattle economy cannot survive the invasion of the farm by the tractor, the Diesel engine or the electric pump.

Let us take the next necessary of life—clothing—which, in spite of mills, has remained unsolved. In 1951 the cloth available per annum in India was 11.5 yards per head and the utmost the Planning Commission could promise was that they would give 15 yards of cloth per annum at the end of their first five year plan, and 18 yards per annum at the end of the second five year plan. Now, 20 seers of ginned cotton or 70 seers of un-ginned cotton are calculated to give from 480 to 512 standard hanks of yarn of 840 yards each in 1,460 man-hours. Each member in a family of five, by spending 48 minutes daily, or the whole family giving four hours daily collectively to spinning and ancillary processes, can thus produce enough yarn to be woven into 121 square yards of cloth. This will give per head 24 yards of cloth per annum.

Nor is this a mere theoretical calculation. The 7th grade children of about 14 years of age in the Sevagram Basic School produced 60 square yards of cloth in 947 man-hours (including all the processes from the cleaning of cotton to the production of finished cloth). In other words, if the quota of 15 yards per head is prepared at home, a family of 5 will have to give 3 hours and 45 minutes or each individual 45 minutes daily. Gandhiji, therefore, made spinning and the allied processes the foundation of his system of Basic Education and further laid down that a minimum measure of "sacrificial spinning" should be regarded as a daily must in which every citizen of India should engage as a matter of national duty, even as swimming is in England.

Simplicity is the essence of universality. The outstanding merit of Gandhiji's solution of India's basic problems of food and clothing is its elemental simplicity. It involves almost negligible capital cost, as such costs go. The quotient of efficiency, i.e. the ratio of production to capital cost in the case of the spinning-wheel is higher by far than in the case of a textile mill. Every man, woman and child, even the sick and the decrepit, can engage in spinning after a short training. Production can, therefore, be increased so as to keep pace with the growing numbers almost indefinitely. Further, the hand process enables higher counts to be spun from inferior grades of cotton. As these varieties of cotton are more prolific in their yield, more acreage can be utilised for food production. The bulk of the cotton needed by the spinners can be grown by themselves in their own cottage yards or in the neglected nooks and corners of the village and its environs. Similarly, odd moments of spare time interspersed with domestic and other chores, which would otherwise be lost, can be turned to account in this way. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* to other handicrafts.

Scientists tell us that if a method could be discovered of economical extraction of the infinitesimal percentage of gold that is present in the sea water, the precious metal thus recovered would exceed many times the entire supply from all the gold mines in the world. Similarly, said Gandhiji, if the full potential of the infinitesimals in the form of minute bits of unutilised time and labour of the millions, and of neglected resources that were within almost everybody's reach were fully utilised, the result in terms of the well-being of the masses would far exceed what any Government or organisation could achieve even by the most ambitious and costliest of its schemes. Take subsistence farming based on human and cattle economy. As Lord Northbourne put it: "Though the value of each separate bit of wastage . . . is infinitesimal, the aggregate of all must be gigantic. To anyone whose eyes are opened the contemplation of this unceasing leakage, day after day and year after year, is distressing and alarming. On the other hand, the collection and skilful conversion to use and beauty of these seemingly unimportant materials is a most fascinating and satisfactory pursuit. Responsible authorities, national and local, are important. But the ordinary individual is more so. . . . He can stop the tiny leaks, which together are more important probably even than the big ones. More than this — any little plot can become a centre of renewed vitality which can act as a nucleus for the extension of influence to neighbouring areas. And on the small scale the deadening influence of monetary considerations can usually be kept at bay."[175]

There was no quicker way, Gandhiji maintained, of providing to the millions of India the means of healthy subsistence, which was the question of questions before them but which had all along remained unsolved, than to arm them with the necessary tools and techniques and enable them to do it themselves by utilising the infinitesimals. Herein lies the revolutionary significance of Gandhiji's method. Organised industry, ruled as it is by commercial considerations, cannot do this. And yet it makes a tremendous difference in the sum when millions upon millions do it together.

During one of his visits to the Kolar Gold Fields, Gandhiji was once shown mounds of gold-bearing clay that had grown sky-high because the percentage of the residuary gold in the clay was considered to be too low for economical extraction by methods hitherto known. But a new process had recently been discovered which made this possible and so the clay was being shovelled back into a series of wells for the recovery of the precious metal. It ushered in a revolution in the technology of gold extraction.

Gandhiji's method of effectively utilising the latent power of the masses by the alchemy of non-violent organisation is as revolutionary in its implications as the Cyanide process for the recovery of residual gold from the gold-bearing clay.

Years ago, when he first started talking of the spinning-wheel, Gandhiji once observed in one of his prayer addresses, it was mainly as a means of supplementing the income of the poor cultivators and the village women. Later on he discovered the tremendous power hidden in the spinning-wheel. That power was the power of non-violence. If all men and women and children of age out of the forty crores of India plied the wheel, they would of course spin all the yarn required for the use of the millions and save crores of rupees. But that was in his eyes not of great consequence. The greatest thing he valued in it was "the power generated by the cooperative effort of these four hundred millions of people."[176]

In the pursuit of his quest for the power of non-violence, Gandhiji had found that non-violence is best expressed through insignificant-looking little things. To achieve non-violent organisation of the people, therefore, he said, they had to concentrate upon and attain perfection in little things to the exclusion of big ones. They would then get big results. This required the popular leaders, officials and members of the ruling class to become truly the servants of the people. They had to renounce privilege and identify themselves with the masses whose representatives they claimed to be. Then alone would they be able to enter into the minds of the masses and the masses theirs. Out of it would be born the spontaneous mass cooperation that would make the miracle possible.

13

A host of eminent writers—Henry Maine, Munro, Elphinstone, Metcalfe and others—have left us a living pen-picture of India's ancient system of self-governing village communities. "Little republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations"; "they contain in miniature all the materials of a State within themselves"; "almost sufficient to protect their members, if all other Governments are withdrawn"—these are some of the descriptions given of them.[177] It was this union of the village communities, "each one forming a separate State in itself," recorded Sir Charles Metcalfe, afterwards Governor-General of India, that had contributed "more than any other cause to the preservation of the people of India through all revolutions and changes which they have suffered, and it is in a high degree conducive to their happiness and to the enjoyment of a greater portion of freedom and independence."

The soul of this system was the village council or Panchayat. The local Panchayat and the hereditary functionaries carried out public

works, looked after construction and repair of public buildings and wells, supervised tanks and water courses, education and sanitation. It gave to the village community "a solid basis of common life and purpose". They had poor law though unwritten.[178] Land was set aside for the purpose of poor relief, cesses were put on the artisans for their unfortunates and a part of the crops set aside for the poor. "Their life," a Western contemporary has testified after observing the system at work in some of the Indian villages where it still survives, "is built on common gain and common loss. When the crop of one land-owner is poor, all suffer. When the yield of the oil-presser is poor, they all lose. The very meaning of 'society' (the living and working relationships among men) is an inherent part of their knowledge. . . . I have felt that these village people have a deeper, more fundamental knowledge of society life than we do."[179]

The village headman was responsible for the arrangement for watch and ward. The village watchman, his chief assistant, acted as the police within the village. Justice was administered on commonsense principle. There was no voting, no majority rule in the Panchayat; the people gathered together and talked and argued as in a family, until a "general associated opinion" emerged, which was accepted by all. On all accounts Panchayat justice was speedy, efficient and cheap. It discouraged litigation, helped settle disputes out of court by agreement among the parties themselves, which is the foundation and acid test of non-violent democracy, and fostered love of justice and the habit of truth-telling among the people. Sir William Sleeman, the British Resident at Lucknow, put on record his witness that whereas evidence in British courts was "fantastically unreliable" it was easy to get at the truth in a Panchayat. "There are no people in the world," he testified, "from whom it is more easy to get it (truth) in their own village communities where they state it before their relations, elders, and neighbours whose esteem is necessary to happiness and can be obtained only by an adherence to the truth."[180]

It was the spirit of self-government which gave to the Indian village system its vitality. It made the village road, tank or well or canal "really alive" and the village folk, who built them by their initiative, cooperation and free, voluntary labour, to feel "a proprietory interest and pride" in it. As a result, we have it on record that in Madras Presidency alone, at one time, irrigation by small tanks and canals, which the villagers managed themselves, irrigated "collectively an area equal to that irrigated by all the larger works which have been constructed by the British Government in that Presidency."[181]

Here is a picture of "dynamic democracy" in action which enables the people "to devise their own solutions for the growing problems and changing patterns of life themselves." So strongly attached were the people to their way of life that, as Sir William Sleeman testified,

ninety-five per cent. of the people of Oudh were opposed to annexation by the British. "And this in spite of the fact that the ryots had been oppressed not a little by the Nawabs of Oudh, for the simple reason that the latter had never interfered with their village system."

When the British took over, they incorporated the Panchayat as a part of the British system and put a cess or tax to get done by paid labour the work which was formerly done by the voluntary labour of the villagers under their own Panchayat. This was contrary to the spirit of self-government. The Panchayat, as Gandhiji pointed out, can "function only under a law of its own making". It lost its roots when it derived its authority from the British laws instead of the will of the village community. Stripped of its real responsibility and power it lost its "function" and with that the village works and institutions theirs. They became neglected and uncared for. Education declined,[182] villages became "dung heaps", malnutrition and epidemics became endemic. It was the same with poor relief, sanitation,[183] watch and ward and so on. They wilted and became corrupt when they were integrated with the British system of administration. "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds." The village watchman used to be a protector to the village in the true sense of the term, when the whole village shared the responsibility for the arrangement for internal and external security of the village. He became a petty oppressor, dreaded and detested by the villager when he became the agent of the police —and so he continues to be to this day.

Subsequent attempts by the British officials to revive these institutions as part of the governmental machine evoked little popular enthusiasm in spite of the backing by ample Government funds. Neither administrative efficiency nor the "cash nexus" could restore the vitality that spontaneous organisation gives when a self-sufficient and self-contained community conscious of its autonomous powers sets about to solve its problems by cooperation among its own members, untrammelled and unhampered by external authority.

In the heyday of its strength and vitality, before it fell upon evil times, this system insured to everybody a home, an honest occupation and means of healthy subsistence. It had its shortcomings and defects. It was weighed down by social evils like child marriage, caste, untouchability, ignorance, superstition and lack of a sense of corporate cleanliness. But they were not essential to it. It was Gandhiji's firm conviction that the self-governing village community about which Munro and others wrote was not defunct. It was capable of being resuscitated by re-creation of its self-governing powers and regional self-sufficiency. Thus regenerated, revitalised and purged of its evils, it could, with suitable modifications, meet all the present-day needs of democracy.

14

Practically all "rural reconstruction schemes" that one hears of these days devised by Governments, whether capitalist or Socialist, have one thing in common. They are all dominated by commercial considerations and therefore by money values. They provide palliatives; they do not touch the root of the problem. Take for instance, "marketing schemes". They operate as "concealed subsidies"; sometimes they become schemes for the restriction of production. Then there are "price-fixing machinery" and schemes for providing rural credit. Price-fixing inevitably leads to similar demands from powerful industrial interests and gives rise to a sort of a "political price war" in which the peasant finds himself up against, what a writer has called, "anti-rural" solidarity of urban elements—industry, commerce and the town proletariat—"at war with each other but at one against the non-organised or poorly organised peasants."[184] Their common slogan of "cheap bread" and low cost of living, puts them in the same cry against the farmers with the result that in the struggle for higher wages between capital and labour, it is the peasant and the rural population that suffers. Price-fixing policy can, besides, put the farmer at the mercy of the price-fixing authority which may "in effect become an agricultural dictatorship".[185] Nationalisation of land *per se* only enables the State or the regional authority to appropriate to itself the profits accruing from private ownership of land, and rural credit machinery substitutes an impersonal and therefore "inhuman and probably inefficient landlord (or banker) for one who is usually human and often efficient."[186] The same about rural credit facilities.[187] While helping the rural community to keep its head above water financially, they provide no immunity from exploitation. In fact they can be used, as they have been in the past, to further the exploitation of the villages. They cannot restore to the village community its springs of inner strength and vitality.

The essential distinction between the urban and the agrarian is that the urban has not that "inner linkage with the soil". He regards the soil and the commodities he handles as something that has to be turned into cash. They have only an indirect bearing on his life's upkeep. His thinking is in terms of money. The agrarian, on the other hand, is a producer in the primary sense, a "partner in the recreative power of the earth".[188] Farming with him is a way of life, a medium for the expression of life's values.

The peasantry derives vitality from the soil to the extent to which it lives out of and with the land it cultivates, with the minimum of intervention of money economy. A farmer, when he has to buy his

food and feed for his cattle and for his crops from the towns-man, loses the essential advantage of his way of life. He becomes cut off from the springs of his vitality. Though he may still be living and working on the land, nutritionally he becomes an appendage of the town. And since he has less money to spend than the towns-man, he may fare even worse. The townsman can anyway with his money still provide himself in some measure with what nature used to provide to the farmer free.

So long as the rural community is not effectively insulated from an economic system in which money rules, life is governed by false values and production is subordinated to commercial and business considerations, the agrarian cannot come into his own. Land must cease to be a commodity. Similarly labour and money must cease to be commodities, and the rural community must become biologically whole, self-contained and largely independent of money economy. In short, each regional unit should be able to produce for itself all the food supplies it needs for men, animals and crops.

The secret of the strength, stability and vitality of India's village communities was their independence of the modern monetary system. Direct exchange of products and services among themselves, and the fact that from within the borders of the village (or a group of villages) came most of the products on which its existence depended—its food, its clothing, its tools, even its currency—encouraged sharing and forged a living bond of unity and cohesion among the various sections. It made each village community a stronghold of democracy. This was undermined when the system of collection of dues *in cash by Government officials* was substituted for the traditional method of *payment in kind by the village through its own functionaries.*

When payment of land dues was in the form of a fixed share of the produce, it gave to the farmer automatic relief when his harvest was poor or when it failed. If production from the land fell the State's share of the receipts was reduced. The State was, therefore, directly interested in the yield from the land, year after year. That lessened the temptation on its part to put burdens upon the peasantry which could be met only by drawing upon soil capital.

Payment in kind depended upon things which the peasant himself cultivated and which therefore he could understand and control. But when he was made to pay in a substance which he himself did not produce, he became subject to "the unknown forces of unseen masters, who themselves controlled that substance."[189] Anything that takes the peasants away from the goods into the orbit of "variable, uncertain, and unfathomable abstraction, money, particularly money that is not of their own making"[190] weakens them. It exposes them to the fluctuations of the money market and undermines their security which is their main asset in the struggle for survival. That is the

reason for the peasants' innate distrust of all city-contacts and urban blue-prints for his "uplift".

Formerly, when wealth was stored in the form of commodities, it was not easy to steal, hide away, squander or misappropriate the fruits of honest toil. But now that wealth is stored in the form of money, this has become infinitely easy and there is no limit to it. Payment of dues in kind relates the nation's economy to things that are vitally necessary to the primary well-being of the common man. It brings the national finance "actually to earth" and gives to a nation's whole economy a different turn. "The ship of State and State-finance is seen to have a different rudder, which, though its small-scale movement is separate from the bulky movement of the great vessel, nevertheless determines the direction of that movement."[191]

To give to national economy that "primary initiation" in the well-being of the common man which would enable him to have real control over it, Gandhiji suggested that the bulk of the nation's wealth should be stored in a form that does not lend itself so readily to chicanery and abuse. As a step towards it, he began advocating payment of land dues in kind. Further, to rescue in as large a measure as possible village economy from the ambit of the modern monetary system, he began experimenting with such institutions as "grain banks", "hand-spun yarn currency" and a system of rural credit backed by labour instead of gold,[192] holding with Sir Daniel Hamilton that "where men are plentiful, money need not be scarce. For the labour is their capital." Payment of Government dues in labour, he held, benefited the community no less than the State. "Often it will be found that payment in labour is of greater value to the State than payment in coin. Payment in labour invigorates the nation. Where people perform labour voluntarily for the service of sociery, exchange of money becomes unnecessary. The labour of collecting the taxes and keeping accounts is saved and the results are equally good."[193] It could further be shown, he claimed, "that by putting into practice the ideal of self-help and self-sufficiency they will have to pay the lowest taxes and realise a greater degree of happiness in the sum than is possible under any other system."[194] Payment in kind would also insure that the taxes realised from the toilers on the land would not be spirited away but would largely be used for the benefit of those from whom they were collected.

The bulk of the produce of the village, under this arrangement, would remain in the village itself and enable the villagers to convert their full potential of labour into capital. This would make it possible for them to carry out works and projects for their uplift without depending on financial aid from outside. Further, since the land dues would be in the form of a fixed share of the gross produce, the producer would not be cheated out of the fruits of his toil as he often is

at present. Urban prosperity would not be achieved at the expense of rural distress, nor would the grower's gain represent the consumer's loss. For such goods and services as the villagers might need from the cities—and these would be reduced to the absolute minimum—the villagers would collectively exchange their surplus produce on a fair and equitable basis.[195] Since the towns folk would need what the villager produces as vitally as if not more than the villager needs their goods and services, they would not be able to charge the latter an outrageous price for the goods and services they provide to him. The glaring contrast between the level of rural and urban incomes would tend to disappear. All goods and services that are vital to society would command equal remuneration and an integrated, equalitarian social system emerge in the place of the present competitive one with vertical divisions. There was no other way, Gandhiji maintained, of insuring to the common man in the village the even tenor of a secure, comfortable existence, unaffected by unstable currency conditions and manipulations of the stock exchange by unscrupulous and greedy speculators, and free from urban domination, and exploitation of man and nature by subservience to money values, except to organise life on the basis of self-contained farming communities, independent of money economy at least so far as their internal needs were concerned.

A community organised on this basis would, averred Gandhiji, develop a strong sense of autonomy, security and inner strength, and possess a greater measure of real democracy and control over the things that are vital to their existence than citizens of any modern State do.

15

There are two well-known approaches to life. One is embodied in the well-known dictum of the famous German Professor, William Roscher: "Every advance in culture made by man finds expression in an increase in the number and in the keenness of his rational wants." The other is summed up in the Indian spiritual ideal of a wise and watchful self-restraint.

The soil sets limits. It requires the villager to contain himself within its capacity. The doctrine of the soil is, therefore, one of self-control and limitation of desires. Mechanised industry knows no such limitation. Its law is one of progressive increase. Those who laid down the pattern of India's ancient culture could not accept the notion that culture increases with the increase in the number of man's wants and their satisfaction. Man's wants are numberless, they argued. Therefore, if given free rein, they would lead to "ceaseless struggle and endless competition" in which "many would still have desires, which, being suppressed by circumstances but not by self-control",

would pervert the mind and spell misery. The only release from the earthly to the divine, they declared, was the path of voluntary self-control and eventual abolition of desire. Life's goal was not the satisfaction of man's "numberless wants" but attainment of perfection in the performance of one's essential duties, and realisation of oneness with the entire creation and through it with the supernal reality, by dint of selfless service of all that lives.

This concept found expression in India's indigenous village system based on functional division of society (see Vol. I, page 548). The other effloresced in the doctrine of progress and the economy of abundance on which the present-day industrial system is based.

"The mind is a restless bird," observed Gandhiji, "the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. . . . Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgence. . . . Our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre. They, therefore, after due deliberation, decided that we should only do what we could with our hands and feet. They saw that our real happiness and health consisted in a proper use of our hands and feet. They further reasoned that large cities were a snare and a useless encumbrance and that . . . in them . . . poor men would be robbed by rich men. They were, therefore, satisfied with small villages."[196]

Gandhiji's system does not aim at what he dubbed as "the civilisation of the rose without the thorn". He did not believe in a "Brave New World"—from which all pain and toil have been abolished. "Life, demands for its consummation and fulfilment," Jung points out, "a balance between joy and suffering." But suffering is in itself unpleasant. People, therefore, "prefer not to think about how much care and sorrow belong to the natural lot of man. So they use comforting words such as progress and the greatest possible happiness, forgetting that happiness itself is poisoned when the measure of suffering has not been fulfilled."[197] The law of compensation is unrelenting. Behind a neurosis, psychiatrists tell us, "there is often concealed all the natural and necessary suffering which the patient has been unwilling to bear."[198] A patient suffering from hysterical pains, it is found, is cured when he accepts, and learns to live with, the corresponding psychic pain from which he sought to run away.

It was not for man, therefore, said Gandhiji, to hanker after an "impossible state of happiness" but to cultivate the right outlook and spiritual discipline which would enable him to face the problems of life with balance, fortitude and emotional maturity. Happiness contradicts itself when we make its pursuit our sole aim. In the words of Gerald Heard, happiness can be attained only as a "by-product of some farther-ranged activity". The same applies to economics. Only when we aim at "an order which transcends the economic and the

material"[199] that we get even the right material conditions under which the ends of economics, viz. health, happiness and peace of the individual and society can be realised. It is not the economic progress that we achieve but what happens to us in its pursuit, that really matters. "With the best will in the world," Jung warns us, "we cannot bring about paradise on earth, and even if we could, in a very short time we should have degenerated in every way."[200] The highest suicide and insanity rates in the world today in some of the most highly industrialised countries, where in terms of material happiness, the people have practically nothing left to desire, bears this out.

To the modern "intellectual" manual toil is a sign of barbarism, at best a necessary evil, which science will enable us one day to outgrow. Yet work, physical work, as Freud has reminded us, is "the chief means of binding an individual to reality." "Reality," observes H. J. Massingham, "is apprehended through the medium of religion, agriculture and the 'manual trades'. . . . These are the basic activities by which the universal communicates itself to the particular, the eternal to the temporal and the absolute to the relative."[201]

Gandhiji did not regard all body labour as the "curse of Adam". On the contrary, he firmly believed that body labour, or "bread labour" as he called it after the expression coined by the Russian peasant-writer Bondaref, was the law of life and eating one's bread in the sweat of one's brow a necessary condition for the health, happiness and inner peace of the individual and society. Many of our present-day social ills, he held, were traceable to the infringement of this law: "Obedience to the law of bread labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service. The law of the brute will be replaced by the law of man."[202]

"We contemplate a time," observed Thoreau, "when man's will shall be law to the physical world, and he shall . . . indeed be the lord of creation. . . . Thus is Paradise to be Regained and that old and stern decree at length reversed. Man shall no more earn his living by the sweat of his brow. All labour shall be reduced to 'a short turn of some crank' and 'taking the finished articles away'." This, however, he pointed out, leaves out—and there's the rub—one consideration. There is "a certain divine energy in every man, but sparingly employed as yet" which is "quite indispensable to all work. No work can be shirked. It may be postponed indefinitely, but not infinitely. Nor can any really important work be made easier by . . . machinery. Not one particle of labour now threatening any man can be routed without being performed. It cannot be hunted out of the vicinity like jackals and hyenas. It will not run." Nor is this something to be deplored. For there is a "small, private, but both constant and accumulated, force which stands behind every spade

in the field. This it is that makes the valleys shine, and the deserts really bloom."[203]

It was the proper and full utilisation for the regeneration of man and nature of this reserve of divine energy, which the masses represent, that was the aim of Gandhiji's system of economy. Return to the village, according to him, meant "a definite voluntary recognition of the duty of bread labour and all that it connotes."[204]

Gandhiji found sanction for his philosophy of "body labour" in a verse in the Gita which says that he who eats without offering "sacrifice" eats sin. The word "sacrifice" in this context, he affirmed, could only mean "bread labour". "Reason too leads us to an identical conclusion. . . . A millionaire cannot carry on for long, and will soon get tired of his life, if he rolls in his bed all day long, and is even helped to his food. He therefore induces hunger by exercise, and helps himself to the food he eats. If every one, whether rich or poor, has thus to take exercise in some shape or form, why should it not assume the form of productive, i.e. bread labour? No-one asks the cultivator to take breathing exercise or to work his muscles. And more than nine-tenths of humanity lives by tilling the soil. How much happier, healthier and more peaceful would the world become, if the remaining tenth followed the example of the overwhelming majority, at least to the extent of (performing) labour enough for their food!"[205]

It may, however, be objected that the potential benefits of life on the land are largely hypothetical. To millions of people living in India's villages at any rate, life today means only destitution, toil and semi-starvation. This, Gandhiji admitted, was unfortunately but too true. The real cause for this, however, was that theirs was not voluntary obedience to the law of bread labour. "Compulsory obedience to the law of bread labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it, must bring contentment and health. And it is health which is real wealth."[206] Under proper economic conditions life of active physical work on the land need not be dull or exhausting. In fact, there is no end to the interest and even excitement to be derived from it. If it is otherwise today the reason for it is not physical labour but because many, who ought to, do not perform it. Many hardships connected with agriculture would easily be redressed, said Gandhiji, if everybody took a hand in it. What is more, "invidious distinctions of rank would be abolished, when every one without exception acknowledged the obligation of bread labour. . . . There is a world-wide conflict between capital and labour, and the poor envy the rich. If all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be obliterated; the rich would still be there, but they would deem themselves only trustees of their property, and would use it mainly in the public interest."[207]

In a moving passage in his book *The Conquest of Bread* Prince Kropotkin has described how of all the great days of the French Revolution "the greatest was the one on which the delegates who had come from all parts of France to Paris, worked all with the spade to plane the ground of the Champ de Mars, preparing it for the fete of the Federation."

> That day France was united: animated by the new spirit, she had a vision of the future in the working in common of the soil.
>
> And it will again be by the working in common of the soil that the enfranchised societies will find their unity and will obliterate the hatred and oppression which has hitherto divided them.
>
> Henceforth, able to conceive solidarity—that immense power which increases man's energy and creative forces a hundred-fold —the new society will march to the conquest of the future with all the vigour of youth.
>
> Ceasing to produce for unknown buyers and looking in its midst for needs and tastes to be satisfied, society will liberally assure the life and ease of each of its members, as well as that moral satisfaction which work gives when freely chosen and freely accomplished, and the joy of living without encroaching on the life of others.
>
> Inspired by a new daring—born of the feeling of solidarity —all will march together to the conquest of the high joys of knowledge and artistic creation.[208]

Behind Gandhiji's passion for the resuscitation of the spinning-wheel, and a social order in which the values symbolised by it would find full expression, was his deep yearning to realise his identity with the Ultimate by identifying himself with the millions who toil.

16

One thing, however, must be conceded. Gandhiji's system of economy will not enable us to build a mighty war potential. The nature of modern war is such that it cannot be successfully waged by any nation which does not possess a highly developed system of capital goods industry supplemented by mass-producing consumer goods industry, which can be quickly converted for war-time needs in armaments and other war material. Again, modern war cannot be waged successfully except by nations that can mobilise their entire man-power in military or industrial conscription. And the universal conscription of population as well as conscription of wealth in the form of heavy war-time taxation can be best enforced when large numbers of people are dependent for their livelihood upon large-scale, private

employers and corporations, or that biggest of corporations—the State. Cottage industries cannot finance a growing war machine.

The people have, therefore, to make their choice. If they want armaments—a mighty war machine—centralised, mechanised system of mass production is the way. They, too, will then have their armament kings and "merchants of death", their Schneiders and Skodas, who will not scruple to amass profits by selling in between wars their surplus of armaments to their potential enemies. Governments have been known to connive at and even to encourage such practices to keep running in peace time their ordnance factories at full throttle. And in the event of a war, these armaments may be used by the enemy against the very country that produced them, as happened during the two world wars. On the other hand, if peace, freedom, health and plenty for the millions, and culture in the real sense of the term is what we desire, then all this can be had most easily by following Gandhiji's method.

"But then our neighbours will swallow us," we shall be told. This fear, said Gandhiji, was unbecoming a people that could bring to its knees the mighty British Power in the short span of one generation. A people that had learnt the art of non-violent non-cooperation and non-violent resistance unto death could not be easily swallowed or digested by any power. Under right conditions non-violent defence against aggression could yield even more spectacular results than what could be obtained by the use of arms. The condition was that the people should be determined to be wiped out rather than submit or cooperate with the invader in any shape or form. This applies equally to armed defence. Now, a country with a decentralised system of economy based on cottage crafts and self-contained villages, can offer obstinate, prolonged, non-violent resistance to the invader much better than a country where life is organised on a higly complex, mechanised basis. Such resistance is bound in the end to wear down the invader and force him to come to terms, especially if the numbers are on the side of the defenders. A centralised, factory-based system of economy presents a tempting target to the enemy. By seizing it or disrupting it, he can bring all life to a stand-still and reduce the people to submission. That was what happened in Amritsar when General Dyer cut off the water and electric supply of the city during the Martial Law regime in 1919. A rural economy based on self-contained villages or groups of villages is not so easily disrupted, and recovery after devastation is much quicker. As Gandhiji put it, it would take quite a long time to blast out a whole sub-continent village by village and hamlet by hamlet. "Even if Hitler was so minded, he could not devastate seven hundred thousand non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process."[209]

Besides, is there any guarantee that armaments would always prove effective against aggression? And if armaments fail, as they inevitably do before superior armaments and sometimes even before inferior ones, what then? It is a common experience that when people put their trust in armaments, there is nothing left but abject surrender if their armaments are overpowered, or if they are disarmed. The philosophy of the Maginot Line, Gandhiji warned us, would prove a dangerous trap if we put our faith in it. It failed France in her hour of trial, just as its counterpart failed Hitler's Germany later and ended in its utter ruin. But there is a potent and unfailing means of vindicating their honour and self-respect always available to a people trained to wield the weapon of Satyagraha. Gandhiji revealed to us its secret at the time of the threatened Japanese invasion during the darkest period of the Second World War (see Appendix A). It enabled us to keep our heads erect and our spirits braced. Finally, extermination under Satyagraha is not extinction. And if war unto death can be an admissible solution of the problem posed by possible aggression by a powerful neighbour, why not non-violent non-cooperation unto death without surrender?

The question of national defence in the present-day shrinking world is in a sense a part of the wider issue of world peace. We look forward to the day when war will be outlawed by civilised nations as the quintessence of barbarism and bestiality, and universal peace will reign upon earth. Peace through a world organisation is the dream of the present era. The difficulty arises in finding an apt sanction. If there is one thing that the two world wars within our memory have conclusively shown, it is the hollowness of the myth of "war to end war". Realisation of peace through a world organisation must remain an empty dream so long as the only sanction available to us is that of military force like what the aggressor commands. To put down aggression by military force, the world organisation would have to out do the aggressor in ruthlessness; indifferent adoption of his method won't do. But if that is done, the particular aggressor may be destroyed but his method will remain. It will not be truth or justice necessarily that will have triumphed but the logic of superior brute force. And if the world organisation itself became corrupt, or were dominated by power politics, and delivered a wrong judgment, *Quis custodiet custodes?*—who would then guard the guardians of peace? Must justice in that case go under without any prospect or means of redress or appeal? No human institution is infallible. In the words of Aldous Huxley, so long as the lust of power persists, no political arrangement, however well contrived, can guarantee peace. An all-powerful world organisation armed with the power of atomic destruction, and grown intolerant, arrogant or corrupt, would spell a worse tyranny than mankind has ever known.

Only a world organisation backed by a moral or non-violent sanction can, therefore, guarantee world peace. Speaking about the League of Nations at Geneva in 1931, Gandhiji remarked: "It has always seemed to me that the League lacks the necessary sanctions. . . . I venture to suggest to you that the means we have adopted in India supply the necessary sanction . . . to a body like the League of Nations."[210] His conception of a world Government was that in it all the States of the world are free and equal, no State has its military. "All will be disarmed."[211] There might be a world police to keep order in the absence of universal belief in non-violence. But this would be "a concession to human weakness, not . . . an emblem of peace."[212] Even this international force would be more of the nature of a *shanti sena* or a peace brigade than a modern fighting force commanding unlimited power of destruction. Armaments were unnecessary for the vindication of proved rights, held Gandhiji. "Proved right should be capable of being vindicated by right means as against the rude, i.e. sanguinary means."[213]

The essential condition of the success of a world federation in this context would thus be equality and independence of all nations, big and small. "And the nature of that independence," said Gandhiji, "will correspond to the extent of non-violence assimilated by the nations concerned."[214] To have a warless world, therefore, the economy of the participating units must be free from exploitation in every shape or form —exploitation of the poor by the rich, of the masses by the classes, of the villages by the towns, and of the weaker or so-called undeveloped races by the stronger and more advanced ones.

The reason why the world had become such an insecure place to live in, Gandhiji reasoned, was that while everybody, including the great powers, talked about peace and the abolition of war, they were not prepared to renounce the things for which wars are fought. Imperialist powers clearly could not renounce armaments without "renouncing their imperialist designs." And this was not possible "without these great nations ceasing to believe in soul-destroying competition and to desire to multiply wants and therefore increase their material possessions."[215] During the last world war Gandhiji therefore warned his English pacifist friends that they had to become "little Englanders" and be prepared to sacrifice the bloated standard of living to which they had got accustomed before they could effectively work for world peace.

Wars do not originate at the battle fronts. Nor does peace return automatically when actual fighting ceases. The roots of war lie in conditions that are endemic in our present-day society. That is the reason why, as Norman Thomas pointed out in his book *The Conscientious Objector in America*, the conscientious objector's negative attitude in regard to participation in war proves inadequate. International

tensions these days are very often a reflex of the internal socio-economic tensions within nations. To abolish war we have to eradicate these tensions. Adoption of a non-violent, non-exploiting system of economy, which would ensure to everybody equality and social justice would, therefore, said Gandhiji, prove the surest guarantee for world peace and a country's best defence in the event of aggression.

Exploiting none nor fearing exploitation by any, such a country would discard all armaments and endeavour "to live on the friendliest terms with its neighbours".[216] It would "covet no foreign territory",[217] nor use its material and moral resources for its own selfish advancement only but for the service of the people even across its borders who might be backward or otherwise in need. For its defence it would "rely on the goodwill of the whole world."[218] Even the weakest State could in this way "render itself immune from attack" by learning the art of non-violence, whereas "a small State, no matter how powerfully armed it is, cannot exist in the midst of a powerful combination of well-armed States. It has to be absorbed by or be under the protection of one of the members of such a combination."[219]

Gandhiji's plan of action for meeting the hypothetical case of armed aggression by non-violence can be divided into three parts: before the invasion, during the invasion, and after the invasion. Before the invasion the technique would consist in not waiting to be attacked by the aggressor but forestalling him by a "counter invasion" of goodwill, neighbourliness and unselfish acts of service and of love. How he planned to apply this method to check the trans-border raids in the North-West Frontier Province—that land of fierce Pathan warriors renowned in history—will be found described in my book *A Pilgrimage for Peace.* On a small scale this method was tried with complete success when Gandhiji's Ashram at Sabarmati began to be harassed by members of a criminal tribe that had settled in the vicinity of the Ashram.

During the invasion, the technique would consist in offering non-violent resistance unto death to the last man, and in total non-cooperation with the invader, while not missing any opportunity of rendering humanitarian service to the individual members of the invading hosts whenever an opportunity presented itself. A detailed plan of action in this regard was developed by Gandhiji when India was menaced by the Japanese invasion and the British Government had decided to withdraw their forces to a remote line of defence, which would have left large parts of the country open to the invader.[220]

Should action outlined in the first two stages prove unsuccessful and the aggressor come to occupy the country, resistance would take the form of non-violent non-cooperation and all other forms of Satyagraha.

What would a country pledged to non-violence do if an aggressor

threatened to violate her neutrality and overrun a small neighbouring State? Gandhiji was once asked. Rather than be a passive witness to the destruction of her neighbour's independence, he replied, such a country would refuse passage to the invader, withhold all supplies and dare him "to walk over your (the defenders') corpses." "The army would be brutal enough to walk over them, you might say. I would then say, you will still have done your duty by allowing yourself to be annihilated. An army that dares to pass over the corpses of innocent men and women would not be able to repeat the experiment."[221]

Suppose, the worst came to the worst and the friendly neutral power or powers were unable to prevent aggression, there would still be two ways open to non-violence. One would be to yield possession but non-cooperate with the aggressor. The second way would be non-violent resistance unto death to the last man. "They would offer themselves unarmed as fodder for the aggressor's cannon. . . . The unexpected spectacle of endless rows upon rows of men and women simply dying rather than surrender to the will of an aggressor must ultimately melt him and his soldiery."[222]

The sceptic might here retort that the aggressor would probably "wisely refrain" from using force but simply take possession of what he wants. Supposing he came and occupied mines, factories and all sources of natural wealth belonging to a people, what could non-violent resistance do in the circumstances? The only difference that the adoption of non-violence would make would be that the aggressor would get without fighting what he would otherwise have gained after a bloody fight. Gandhiji's answer to this is that in that case either of the following can take place: (1) The victims of aggression may non-violently resist the occupation of their country and may be annihilated. That would be a "glorious victory" for them and the "beginning of the fall" of the aggressor. (2) They might become demoralised in the presence of the overwhelming force. "This is a result common in all struggles, but if demoralisation does take place, it would not be on account of non-violence." (3) The aggressor might use her new possessions for occupation by her surplus population. "This, again, could not be avoided by offering violent resistance, for we have assumed that violent resistance is out of the question. Thus non-violent resistance is the best method in all conceivable circumstances."[223] Moreover, under non-violence only those would be killed "who had trained themselves to be killed if need be but without killing anyone and without malice towards anybody."[224] Such a feat of non-violent heroism would raise the moral stature of the defenders to an undreamt of height and rouse the slumbering conscience of humanity. A bloody fight, on the other hand, never settles anything and brings only demoralisation in its train to the victor and the vanquished alike.

In 1938, when Japan was overrunning China, in the course of a talk with a group of foreign visitors, Gandhiji said: "If the Chinese had non-violence of my conception, there would be no use left for the latest machinery for destruction which Japan possesses. The Chinese would say to Japan, 'Bring all your machinery, we present half of our population to you. But the remaining two hundred millions won't bend their knee to you.' If the Chinese did that, Japan would become China's slave."[225] He, however, made it clear that for their non-violence to be successful, the Chinese would have to love the Japanese not by remembering their virtues; they "must be able to love them in spite of all their misdeeds."[226]

What use will be freedom if there is no-one left to enjoy it? it may be asked. To this Gandhiji's reply is a counter question: "Who enjoys the freedom when whole divisions of armed soldiers rush into a hailstorm of bullets to be mown down?" Is it not rather strange, he asks, that the soldier fights though he never expects to enjoy the fruits of victory? "But in the case of non-violence, everybody seems to start with the assumption that the non-violent method must be set down as a failure unless he himself at least lives to enjoy the success thereof. This is both illogical and invidious. In Satyagraha more than in armed warfare, it may be said that we find life by losing it."[227]

Again it has been objected that wars are fought in order to protect life and property when these are endangered. But Gandhiji said that "so long as the desire to protect life and property remains within us, our Ahimsa cannot be said to be pure."[228] Does this not make nonsense of the whole idea of protection of life and property by non-violence? Gandhiji has an answer to this also. As in armed warfare, so in a non-violent fight, the "entire population will not enlist in the army. But those who are willing to protect the millions by means of non-violence will have to renounce all worldly attachment."[229] Nor is it necessary for the entire population to have faith in Ahimsa before non-violent resistance can be offered successfully on a national scale. In armed warfare every soldier is not and need not be an expert in the military science. Even so, in a non-violent struggle it would be enough, said Gandhiji, if the General had a living faith in non-violence and the people had faith in their General, and the discipline of non-violence to carry out in a soldierly manner faithfully and implicitly the General's orders. For his movement, therefore, he did not need "believers in the theory of non-violence full or imperfect. It is enough if the people carry out the rules of non-violent action."[230]

At any rate, there is no sense in adopting a remedy which ruins a people's economy utterly even before the war begins, irrespective of who wins, and jeopardises democratic freedoms even in peace time for the fear that they might be lost in war. "A society which anticipates and provides for meeting violence with violence," wrote Gandhiji in

1940, "will either lead a precarious life or create big cities and magazines for defence purposes. It is not unreasonable to presume from the state of Europe that its cities, its monster factories and huge armaments are so intimately interrelated that the one cannot exist without the other."[231] Civil liberties are always among the first casualties in war. Nothing comes handier to the military dictators than the plea of preparedness for war as a justification for demanding unquestioning obedience in the name of "national unity" and imposing upon the people a totalitarian regimentation in the name of war-time efficiency. "The science of war," Gandhiji warned, "leads one to dictatorship pure and simple. The science of non-violence can alone lead on to pure democracy."[232] The democracies, therefore, said Gandhiji, had either to become truly non-violent or go totalitarian.[233] Unless they courageously became non-violent, they would be forced to adopt "all the tactics of the Fascists and the Nazis including conscription and all other forcible methods to compel and exact obedience."[234]

Even though he were alone, therefore, said Gandhiji, he would proclaim from the housetop his faith that it was better for India "to discard violence altogether even for defending her borders. For India to enter into the race for armaments is to commit suicide."[235] A free India need not keep a huge standing army, he observed in his prayer speech on the 29th November, 1947. "Voluntary Home Guards would protect their homes and contribute to the defence of the country." India unarmed would not require to be destroyed through poison gas or bombardment. "It is the Maginot Line that has made the Seigfried Line necessary, and *vice versa*. . . . If her people have learnt the art of saying resolutely 'no' and acting up to it, I dare say, no-one would want to invade her."[236]

This, Gandhiji explained in the course of a talk with Louis Fischer at Sevagram in 1942, would mean a thorough decentralisation of power. "You see, the centre of power now is in New Delhi, or in Calcutta and Bombay, in the big cities. I would have it distributed among the seven hundred thousand villages of India." Using the analogy of the Government of India's reserves that were kept in the Imperial Bank of India, he proceeded: "I want the seven hundred thousand dollars . . . withdrawn and distributed among the seven hundred thousand villages. Then each village will have its one dollar which cannot be lost. The seven hundred thousand dollars invested in the Imperial Bank of India could be swept away by a bomb from a Japanese plane, whereas if they were distributed among the seven hundred thousand shareholders, nobody could deprive them of their assets."[237]

A centralised economy cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force, argued Gandhiji. But "simple homes from which there is nothing to take away require no policing; the palaces of the rich must

have strong guards to protect them against dacoity. So must huge factories. Rurally organised India will run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanised India, well equipped with military, naval and air forces."[238]

Her internal economy would thus, said Gandhiji, prove "India's strongest bulwark against aggression."[239] She would cease to be the object of "greedy attraction" for any power and feel secure "without having to carry the burden of expensive armaments."[240] What was more, India could in this way point the way to other struggling people of the world. The world looked for something "new and unique" from India. She would be "lost in the crowd" if she wore "the same old outworn armour that the world is wearing today."[241]

17

India had been forcibly disarmed under the British. This had emasculated India. Must not India, therefore, rearm and train herself in the use of arms before she could become truly non-violent? some asked. "No", said Gandhiji. He had described war as "a respectable term for goondaism."[242] "The hypnotism of the Indian National Army (of Netaji Bose) has cast its spell upon us," he had warned when many had succumbed to it.[243] That India was disarmed, he said, was no obstacle in the path of Ahimsa. "The forcible disarmament of India by the British Government was indeed a grave wrong and a cruel injustice. But we can turn even injustice to our advantage."[244] Training in arms, he held, was altogether unnecessary for developing non-violent courage. In fact "the arms if any have to be thrown away."[245] The Pathans in the North-West Frontier Province under the inspiration and leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan had done this. It had forced from the British the admission that a non-violent Pathan was more dangerous than a Pathan with arms.[246] To hold that it was essential to learn violence before one could attain non-violence would be, said Gandhiji, tantamount to holding that only sinners could be saints. Far more terrible weapons than mankind had ever seen before had come into existence and newer ones were being invented every day. Of what fear would a "sword rid him who has to cultivate the capacity to overcome all fear—real or imaginary ?" he asked. "I have not yet heard of a man having shed all fear by learning sword-play. Mahavir and others who imbibed Ahimsa did not do so because they knew the use of weapons, but because in spite of the knowledge of their use they shed all fear."[247]

Besides, he argued, "he who has always depended upon the sword will always find it difficult to throw it away."[248] It is true

that by deliberately discarding arms "he is likely to find his Ahimsa more lasting than that of him who, not knowing its (the sword's) use, fancies he will not fear it."[249] But that does not mean that in order to be truly non-violent, one must beforehand possess and know the use of arms. "By parity of reasoning, one might say that only a thief can be honest, only a diseased person can be healthy, and only a dissolute person can be Brahmachari."[250]

Gandhiji did not have the time in the midst of his other pre-occupations to tackle the question of the training and organisation of a non-violent force of his conception except in a desultory way. But after the resignation of the Congress Ministries in the Provinces at the outbreak of the Second World War, when communal rioting broke out in several parts of India, he began to outline his ideas on the training and organisation of *shanti senas* or a non-violent force in concrete detail. The picture is necessarily incomplete for the simple reason that Gandhiji had no past experience to fall back upon. But some of the underlying principles of non-violent training and equipment necessary for a soldier of Satyagraha enunciated by him from time to time can usefully be summarised.

The first requisite for the successful organisation of non-violent defence is faith in its feasibility and in human nature. "Man often becomes what he believes himself to be. If I keep on saying to myself that I *cannot* do a certain thing, it is possible that I may end by really becoming incapable of doing it. On the contrary, if I have the belief that I *can* do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning."[251]

The difficulty is that the non-violent process is wholly different from the one commonly known. A study of the "critical limit" phenomena in the physical world shows that the normal laws governing the behavior of matter are altered, sometimes reversed, once the critical limit is passed. An analogous thing happens when we pass from a violent army to a non-violent force. Very few of the rules applying to the organisation and training of a violent army apply to the training of a non-violent force. In fact very often the opposite holds good. For instance, a violent army will have arms not merely for show but for effective killing. A non-violent army will not only have no use for such weapons but it will "beat its swords into plough-shares and spears into pruning hooks."[252] In the case of candidates recruited for a violent army physical fitness is the only thing examined. The chief thing in selecting recruits for a non-violent body would be mental or spiritual fitness. Since even old men, women and children, or those suffering from a physical ailment may have this fitness as well as any able-bodied man, a non-violent army may have in its ranks "old men, women, raw youths, the blind and the lame, and even lepers" and yet "bid fair to win."[253] Again, "the ability to kill requires training.

The ability to die is there in him who has the will for it. One can conceive of a child of ten or twelve being a perfect Satyagrahi."[254] Or to put it differently, "The art of dying follows as a corollary from the art of living."[255]

This does not mean that members of a Satyagrahi army have no need for physical fitness. If the Satyagrahi is not healthy in mind and body, warned Gandhiji, "he may . . . fail in mustering complete fearlessness."[256] The practice of Ahimsa includes certain duties which can only be performed by those with a trained physique. For instance, "he should have the capacity to stand guard at a single spot day and night; he must not fall ill even if he has to bear cold and heat and rain; he must have the strength to go to places of peril, to rush to scenes of fire and the courage to wander about alone in desolate jungles and haunts of death; he will bear without a grumble, severe beatings, starvation and worse, and will keep to his post of duty without flinching; he will have the resourcefulness and capacity to plunge into a seemingly impenetrable scene of rioting; he will have the longing and capacity to run with the name of God on his lips to the rescue of men living on the top-storeys of buildings enveloped in flames; he will have the fearlessness to plunge into a flood in order to rescue people being carried off by it or to jump down a well to save a drowning person."[257] The list can be extended *ad libitum.* "The substance of it all is that we should cultivate the capacity to run to the rescue of people in danger and distress and to suffer cheerfully any amount of hardship that may be inflicted upon us."[258] From this it should easily be possible to frame rules of physical training for Satyagrahis.

The best training for the purpose in Gandhiji's opinion is provided by some of the exercises in *Hatha Yoga.* "The physical training given by means of these imparts among other things physical health, strength, agility, and the capacity to bear heat and cold."[259] He did not know, he said, whether the authour of this science had any idea of mass non-violence. These exercises "had at their back the desire for individual salvation." Their object was "to strengthen and purify the body in order to secure control of the mind."[260] This system might have to be suitably adapted to meet the requirements of giving training in mass non-violence to people of all religions, and rules would have to be framed which could be accepted by all believers in Ahimsa.

Cultivation of bravery is common to both violence and non-violence. There is, however, one difference. The courage of violence "does not mean emancipation from fear, but discovering the means of combating the cause of fear."[261] The votary of non-violence has to cultivate "the capacity for sacrifice of the highest type in order to be free from fear."[262] He has to shed the triple fear of jail going,

loss of possessions and of death. "He recks not if he should lose his land, his wealth, his life. He who has not overcome all fear cannot practise Ahimsa to perfection. The votary of Ahimsa has only one fear, that is, of God."[263] He has therefore to develop a steady awareness of the separateness of the perishable body and the immortal spirit within, which survives and can exist independently of the body, by cultivating indifference to the latter and bringing it more and more under the control of the spirit.

Training in non-violence is thus diametrically opposed to training in violence. "Violence is needed for the protection of things external, non-violence is needed for the protection of the *Atman* (spirit) for the protection of one's honour. . . . The badge of the violent is his weapons—spear, or sword, or rifle. God is the shield of the non-violent."[264] The training of a soldier of non-violence will consist not in learning to shoot. He will "get all his training through nursing the sick, saving those in danger at the risk of his own life, patrolling places which may be in fear of thieves and dacoits, and in laying down his life, if necessary, in dissuading them from their purpose."[265]

Even the uniforms of the two will be different. The uniform of a soldier of violence would be meant to "dazzle" the beholder. "The uniform of the non-violent man will be simple, in conformity with the dress of the poor, and betokening humility."[266]

In a violent army, the greater the competence and the higher the rank, the greater will be the remuneration that he will receive. In the case of a non-violent force merit will not be measured or rewarded in terms of material remuneration. On the contrary, the General will be a person known for his penance, self-restraint and renunciation.

The violent man, again, will be casting about to compass the destruction of the opponent and his power. He will pray to God "to save the King, scatter his enemies, frustrate his knavish tricks" as millions of Englishmen do when they sing aloud the British National anthem. "If God is the Incarnation of Mercy, He is not likely to listen to such prayer but it cannot but affect the minds of those who sing it, and in times of war it simply kindles their hatred and anger to white heat."[267] The prayer of a soldier of non-violence to God, on the other hand, will always be that "He may give the supposed enemy a sense of right and bless him. His prayer for himself will always be that the spring of compassion in him may ever be flowing, and that he may ever grow in moral strength so that he may face death fearlessly."[268] Total defeat of the opponent can have no place in the strategy of non-violence. In fact it is the acid test of true non-violence that at the end of the struggle there is no "victor and vanquished" feeling left. Both the parties share the joy of reconciliation

and of the vindication of truth and justice as a result of their joint endeavour. In a non-violent struggle, therefore, one will seek not to destroy the power of the opponent but to annex his power by effecting a change of heart in him. A soldier of Satyagraha will, therefore, regard the opponent he is fighting as a potential friend and ally and do nothing that is calculated to provoke him into a wrong action, or that is likely to wound him or deepen the antagonism. He will always try to find meeting ground with him and even go out of his way to do him a good turn.

The one condition of winning a violent war is "to keep the indignation against the enemy burning fiercely and subject him to the maximum of provocation.[269] "The secret of Satyagraha lies in not tempting the wrong-doer to do wrong."[270] This alters the whole technique of conducting negotiations, publicity and propaganda in a non-violent fight. The soldier of non-violence will always try to see the best side of his opponent instead of seeing the worst and present to him also the same—"work on, round, upon that side . . . not dangle his faults before him."[271]

Discipline has, indeed, a place in non-violent strategy, as in armed warfare. But there is an important difference. Discipline is of two kinds—external and internal. The discipline inculcated by military training belongs to the first variety. It holds only in the context in which it is imparted. The looseness and indiscipline of the soldier outside the parade ground is not an uncommon experience. Internal discipline is the result of disciplined living. It becomes our second nature and it endures.

Military discipline presupposes an outside authority with an effective sanction to enforce it. It crumbles when the enforcing machinery breaks down. In a non-violent fight everybody is a soldier and a servant. But at a pinch every Satyagrahi soldier has also to be his own General and leader. Mere mechanical discipline cannot make for leadership in a non-violent struggle. For that faith and vision are needed. The discipline rooted in the adherence to the spirit of truth and non-violence brings about an automatic coordination of action which defies all the power of the tyrant to disrupt it. Such is the testimony of the early history of Christianity under persecution. The same was borne out by the various non-violent struggles launched by Gandhiji. They all became at one stage or another, in a large measure, self-acting, self-guided, self-inspired, and self-controlled. In every obstinate non-violent struggle, a stage can and usually does eventually arrive when external organisation is wiped out. The coordination and organisation based on inner discipline is the only thing that survives all shocks. Tolstoy compared the world to a vast temple with light falling through the dome exactly in the middle. "To be united," he observed, "we must not go in search of one another,

we must all go towards the light. Then all of us, come together from all directions, will find ourselves in company of men we did not look for."

Other parts of military training that can have a place in non-violent training are music, drill, organising camp life, signalling and scouting, first aid, control of epidemics and repairing of damge caused by natural calamities like floods, cyclones, earthquake and so on. To these must be added mass singing and mass prayer. A non-violent soldier must besides develop an aptitude for mastering the language of the people among whom he has to work.

The best training ground for a soldier of non-violence is the arena of civil commotion, or where hooligans run amok. "He who trembles or takes to his heels the moment he sees two people fighting is not non-violent, but a coward."[272] Such a one will never become a soldier of non-violence. A non-violent soldier will not turn his face away from the scene of a quarrel or merely look on. He will plunge into the melee and " lay down his life in preventing such quarrels."[273] A member of *shanti sena* or a "peace brigade" must cultivate true Ahimsa in the heart "that takes even the erring hooligan in its warm embrace."[274] Such an attitude cannot be cultivated except by "a prolonged and patient effort which must be made during peaceful times. The would-be member of a peace brigade should come into close touch and cultivate acquaintance with the so-called goonda element in his vicinity. He should know all and be known to all and win the hearts of all by his living and selfless service. No section should be regarded as too contemptible or mean to mix with. Goondas . . . are the product of social disorganisation, and society is therefore responsible for their existence. In other words, they should be looked upon as a symptom of corruption in our body politic. To remove the disease we must first discover the underlying cause. To find the remedy will then be a comparatively easy task."[275]

An essential part of the training of a non-violent soldier, according to Gandhiji, is Brahmacharya or chastity. In the context of non-violent physical training it has a special significance. "He who intends to live on spare diet and without any external remedies and still wants to have physical strength, has need to conserve his vital energy. . . . He who can preserve it ever gains renewed strength out of it."[276] Gandhiji, however, warned that this is not possible without strict observance of all the rules of Brahmacharya. "Those who hope to conserve this energy without strict observance of the rules will no more succeed than those who hope to swim against the current without being exhausted. He who restrains himself physically and sins with his thoughts will fare worse than he who, without professing to observe Brahmacharya, lives the life of a restrained householder."[277]

The rock-bottom foundation of the training of a non-violent soldier is faith in God. If that is absent, said Gandhiji, all the training one may have received is likely to fail at the critical moment. "Let no-one pooh my statement. . . . I am simply trying to state the view in terms of the science of Satyagraha as I have known and developed it. The only weapon of the Satyagrahi is God by whatever name one knows Him. Without Him the Satyagrahi is devoid of strength before an opponent armed with monstrous weapons. Most people lie prostrate before physical might. But he who accepts God as his only Protector will remain unbent before the mightiest earthly power."[273]

In a non-violent fight one cannot always plan in detail ahead of a situation. Preparation in Satyagraha consists in planning one's own life so as to be able to react correctly in terms of truth and non-violence to any situation that might arise. The general of a non-violent army has therefore to have a greater presence of mind and resourcefulness than that of a violent army.

To sum up, the equipment of a Satyagrahi soldier will consist not of weapons of steel but those of the spirit. In Tulsi Ramayana, Vibhishan asks Rama as to what the real equipment of a Satyagrahi army is that leads to victory. Rama had "no chariot, no armour, nor any shoes to his feet." Then how did he expect to win against Ravana, who had all these? To him Rama replies:

> The chariot, my dear Vibhishan, that wins the victory for Rama is of a different sort from the usual one. Manliness and courage are its wheels; unflinching truth and character its banners and standards; strength, discrimination, self-restraint and benevolence its horses, with forgiveness, mercy, equanimity as their reins; prayer to God is that conqueror's unerring charioteer, dispassion his shield, contentment his sword, charity his axe, intellect his spear, and perfect science his stout bow. His pure and unwavering mind stands for a quiver, his mental quietude and his practice of *yama* and *niyama* stand for the sheaf of arrows, and the homage he pays to Brahmans and his *guru* is his impenetrable armour. There is no other equipment for victory comparable to this; and my dear friend, there is no enemy who can conquer the man who takes his stand on the chariot of *dharma*. He who has a powerful chariot like this is a warrior who can conquer even that great and invincible enemy—the world. Hearken unto me and fear not.

An army, however small, of truly non-violent soldiers thus equipped, said Gandhiji, was likely some day to multiply itself. God has a knack of making use of even frail instruments to accomplish

His purpose. But an army that lacked this equipment "was never likely to yield any use whether it increased or decreased."[279]

18

Henry David Thoreau, who shared many things with Gandhiji, in a review of a scientific utopia by a contemporary writer, Etzler,[280] observed that there was a speedier way than harnessing "the power of the wind, waves, tide and sunshine" to create a paradise on earth, and that was by "the power of rectitude and true behaviour". "He who is conversant with the supernal power will not worship these inferior deities of the wind, waves, tide, and sunshine. . . . Love is the wind, the tide, the waves, the sunshine. . . . It can warm without fire; it can feed without meat; it can clothe without garments; it can shelter without roof; it can make a paradise within which will dispense with a paradise without."[281]

Gandhiji's distrust of utopias was not less than Thoreau's. He described as a "nightmare" the push-button era pictured in Edward Bellanmy's *Looking Backward* which would bring every conceivable physical comfort that a man could desire by just pressing a button. Like Thoreau he held that if we could set right our moral relationship with our fellow beings, it would solve all human problems much quicker than any "mechanical system", and create heaven upon earth which even the gods might envy. The instrument he conceived for achieving this transformation of human relationships is his doctrine of Trusteeship.

There is in the New Testament the story of the miracle of five loaves and two fishes which Tolstoy has interpreted for us in his own inimitable way. Shortly after Jesus had commenced his ministry, a vast concourse of people followed him to hear the words of wisdom and healing from his lips. When the day began to wear on, the question arose as to how they were to be fed. One of his twelve disciples came to him and said: "Give the multitude leave to go to the villages and farms round about so that they can find lodging and food: we are in a desert country here." The Master at once saw that if the multitude spread out to the neighbouring farms and huts to scrounge for food they would strip the countryside bare like the locusts. For there were no less than five thousand of them to be fed. "It is for you to give them to eat," he said to the disciple who had come to him. The disciple answered: "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." Then one of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, came and said to him: "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" The Master saw that

like this lad many had brought with them more than their need while others had none. "Put all you have into a basket," he said to the lad, "and let everyone else do likewise." When all the victuals were collected in one place, the story goes, Jesus made the whole assembly sit down in companies of fifty and had the victuals distributed to each according to his need. And, lo and behold, not only "all ate and had their fill but when what they left over was picked up, it filled twelve baskets!"

The miracle wrought by the practice of the principle of love, or voluntary sharing described in the parable of "five loaves and two fishes" has, Gandhiji held, a profound significance for us today. "I venture to suggest," he observed in one of his earliest speeches in India, "that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world." He did not want to dispossess anybody, he went on to say. "I should then be departing from the rule of Ahimsa. . . . But . . . I do say that . . . you and I have no right to anything that we really have until these . . . millions are clothed and fed better. You and I . . . must adjust our wants, and even undergo voluntary starvation in order that they may be nursed, fed and clothed."[282]

Gandhiji believed in the ideal of equal distribution. But when we start to put the ideal into practice, we are confronted with what Professor Haldane has called the inherent "inequality of man". The needs of different people vary. Equal distribution, therefore, said Gandhiji, cannot mean dead uniformity. The real implication of equal distribution is that "each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. For example, if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound, both should be in a position to satisfy their wants."[283] "All men are born free and equal" is not true in the literal sense. It is true only in the sense that all have a moral right to equal opportunity. All have not equal talent; no two leaves on a tree are exactly alike. Some will, therefore, naturally have the ability to earn more than others.

It is of course possible to remove inequalities by "lopping off the tall poppies." This, however, cannot make the peasant equal to the prince. It leaves untouched the problem of recurring inequalities resulting from the natural disparity in the talents and aptitudes of various people. Besides, the moment we try to make men equal by coercion, they cease to be free.

Gandhiji did not want to cramp talent by preventing those who were endowed with superior talent from earning more, or by forcible expropriation to strip those who had more of their possessions. It

would be enough, he said, if they used their talent and the bulk of their riches not for themselves but as a trust for the good of society.

> All have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or colour or degree of intelligence etc.; therefore . . . some will have ability to earn more and others less. People with talents will have more, and they will utilise their talents for this purpose. If they utilise their talents kindly, they will be performing the work of the State (i.e. community). Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father goes to the common family fund.[284]

Gandhiji based his "trusteeship" doctrine on a celebrated verse in the ancient Hindu philosophical scripture, *Ishopanishad*, which says: "All that is in the universe is pervaded by God. Renounce first, therefore, in order to enjoy. Covet not anybody's riches." In other words, everything must, in the first instance, be surrendered to God, and then out of it, one may use, not for selfish enjoyment, but for the service of God's creation, according to one's strict need, and no more. One would then not covet what belongs to another.

Sabhi bhoomi gopalki—all land belongs to the Lord—so runs an ancient Indian saying. No-one is nature's sole legatee. Even our physical constitution is inherited and our talents are largely a social product and, therefore, a part of our joint social heritage. Thus regarded, not only our material possessions but our talent both natural and acquired, our time, our physical body, even our life, are ours not in the absolute sense to be used or abused according to our whim or caprice, but as a trust to be husbanded and used strictly in His service, in other words in the service of society.

Being once asked by an Indian friend at a private gathering in England, "How can we serve India?" Gandhiji replied: "Put your talents in the service of the country instead of converting them into £. s. d. If you are a medical man, there is disease enough in India to need all your medical skill. If you are a lawyer, there are differences and quarrels enough in India. Instead of fomenting more trouble, patch up those quarrels and stop litigation. If you are an engineer, build model houses suited to the means and needs of our people and yet full of health and fresh air. There is nothing that you have learnt which cannot be turned to account." The friend who had asked the question was a Chartered Accountant. Continuing his answer Gandhiji said to him: "Come to India — I will give you enough work and also your hire—

four annas per day, which is surely much more than millions in India get."[285]

Gandhiji was uncompromising in his view that if independent India was to set an example which would be the envy of the world, "all the *Bhangis*, doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work. Indian society may never reach the goal but it was the duty of every Indian to set his sail towards that goal and no other if India was to be a happy land."[286]

This sounds pretty drastic. But in a statement of ideals, it cannot be otherwise. Gandhiji refused to water down his ideals. But as a practical idealist, he tempered the practice of his ideals by charity, or the application of the law of love. He never made the cross heavier than anybody's capacity to bear.

"I am prepared to renounce my millions and give up my business to follow you; you have only to order," said a multi-millionaire friend of Gandhiji to him at the outset of their acquaintance. "I do not want you to renounce either your millions or your business," replied Gandhiji. "I want to make use of both for the service of the poor."

"Why did you damp his ardour," I asked Gandhiji afterwards. "He was sincere. You might have encouraged him in his lofty impulse."

"You do not understand," replied Gandhiji. "It is not so easy to make a total renunciation of one's earthly possessions. I can vouch for this after my life-long striving to achieve this ideal. G. would have gladly done anything that I might have asked him to do, but it would not have come to him naturally. He is gifted with a unique talent for business. He would have felt out of his element in any other capacity and the country would have been the poorer for the loss of his God-given talent. To do business is not in itself immoral. It is possible for one to realise the highest by following one's *swadharma*—natural avocation—in a spirit of service. By imitating the conduct of another although it may appear to be more excellent, we get to nowhere."

And so he could count among his suporters multi-millionaires and owners of vast acres who in different degrees not only placed at his disposal their purse but their talent and goodwill, too, for the service of the poor. Rulers of States voluntarily agreed to a curtailment of their absolute powers, privileges and privy purses. This could not have been achieved otherwise without precipitating a class struggle, which would have created more problems than it solved and made the remedy worse than the disease.

As trustees, said Gandhiji, the owners would be allowed to retain a reasonable commission for themselves in recognition of their service or usefulness to society. The rate of commission in the transition period could be left to them to be determined on a reasonable basis in consultation with society. The actual amount would not by itself, within certain limits, matter very much provided they accepted the underlying

principle and agreed to surrender their existing titles based on absolute ownership for a trusteeship basis. In due course, when the vast bulk of the people were converted to this principle, trusteeship would be embodied in the law of the land and its operation, including the issue of succession, and inheritance of wealth—acquired or otherwise—would be regulated by the State in accordance with the principle of trusteeship. In fact very little of State interference would be necessary as *ex-hypothesi* the principle would have already been accepted by society at large.

19

Is trusteeship then a substitute for the abolition of individual ownership? 'No', said Gandhiji. It is the means for the attainment of that goal. More, it anticipates that goal.

Complete non-possession is an abstraction. It can never be fully realised. In the absolute sense, as has already been noted, even our physical body is a possession. Are the evils of inequality then to go unchecked? Trusteeship provides the answer to this problem of "residuary owrership".

There is a distinction between possession and possessiveness. The evil lies not in possession as such but in possessiveness. Even if all the owners were forcibly dispossessed, the acquisitive or possessive instinct would remain. It is this which is the root cause of conflict. It can be transmuted into an instrument of social good by the application of the principle of trusteeship.

In the reverse, is trusteeship a mere stop-gap arrangement that would cease to have any further use when individual ownership has been abolished? "No", again, is the answer. For even after the existing inequalities of wealth have been removed, the problem of recurring inequalities resulting from the varying capacity and talent of different individuals will remain. Unless outstanding talent is fostered and held in trust to be used in the interest of society, it will again give rise to a privileged class, no matter under what name or garb. As the only answer to the problem of recurring inequalities arising from "residuary ownership", the doctrine of trusteeship has a perennial value and use.

"When transformation of private property into public property has been achieved by the application of the doctrine of trusteeship," Gandhiji was asked, "will the ownership vest in the State, which is an instrument of violence, or in associations of a voluntary character like village communes and municipalities, which may of course derive their final authority from State-made laws?"

"That question," replied Gandhiji, "involves some confusion of

thought. Legal ownership in the transformed condition shall vest in the trustee, not in the State. It is to avoid confiscation that the doctrine of trusteeship comes into play, retaining for society the ability of the original owner in his own right. Nor do I hold that the State must always be based on violence. It might be so in theory but it is possible to conceive a State which in practice would for the most part be based on non-violence."[287]

"How would the successor of a trustee be determined? Will he only have the right of proposing a name, the right of finalisation being vested in the State?"

"The choice," replied Gandhiji, "should be given to the original owner, who becomes the first trustee, but it must be finalised by the State. Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as on the individual."[288]

This did not mean, Gandhiji explained, that pending necessary legislation the transformation of the capitalists into trustees would be left to the sweet will of the capitalists. If they proved impervious to the appeal to reason, the weapon of non-violent non-cooperation would be brought into play. "Force of circumstances will compel the reform unless they court utter destruction. When Panchayat Raj is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do."[289] For instance, if a landlord refused to accept the principle of trusteeship, agricultural labour would boycott his cultivation and public opinion would not allow black-leg labour to be brought in or force to be used against the tenants or the boycotting labourers, so long as they remained strictly non-violent. In Gandhiji's words: "Suppose a landowner exploits his tenants and mulcts them of the fruit of their toil by appropriating it to his own use. When they expostulate with him he does not listen and raises objections. . . . The tenants or those who have espoused their cause and have influence will make an appeal to his wife to expostulate with her husband. Supposing further that he listens to nobody or that his wife and children combine against the tenants, they will not submit. They will quit if asked to do so but they will make it clear that the land belongs to him who tills it. The owner cannot till all the land himself and he will have to give in to their just demands. It may, however, be that the tenants are replaced by others. Agitation short of violence will then continue till the replacing tenants see their error and make common cause with the evicted tenants."[290]

The same holds good in respect of industry. An outstanding source of tension in the present-day world is the struggle between labour and capital. The reason why in the fight against the capitalistic exploitation labour very often fails, said Gandhiji, is that instead of sterilising the power of capital by refusing to be party to its own exploitation, labour wants to seize capital and becomes capitalist in a worse sense. Thereby it puts itself at a disadvantage. The capitalists are better equipped

for the struggle, better organised and better entrenched. They find in the ranks of labour candidates aspiring for the capitalistic role, and make use of them to suppress labour. On the day that labour realised that ultimately it is not pieces of so-called precious metal that constitute true capital but productive, useful labour and learnt effectively to wield the weapon of non-violent non-cooperation, the citadel of exploitation would fall.

Gandhiji envisaged industry as a joint enterprise of labour and capital, in which both "owners" and "workers" were co-trustees for society. Instead of engaging in a class-war and each thinking in terms of its exclusive rights, therefore, they should, he said, concentrate on due performance of their respective duty in terms of the service of society. Rights would accrue from duty well performed. If the capitalists or owners of industry did not discharge their trust properly, not only would it be the right but the moral duty of labour as a co-trustee to withhold its cooperation peacefully; in other words strike work.

Gandhiji's philosophy of strike in labour-capital disputes rests on the principle of reciprocal rights and duties. He told labour that since they were as much owners of industry as the capitalists, as co-trustees they must regard the interests of industry as a whole as their own and direct their attack against the corruption, injustice, inefficiency and short-sighted greed of the owners. This enabled him to appeal to and mobilise the better sense of the owners of industry to his side. His insistence upon non-violence disarmed their fear. He regarded it as a fundamental condition of a successful strike that the demands of the strikers should be clear, feasible and just, and not work to the detriment of social good. This last enabled him to enlist the sympathy of the public on the side of labour.

To ensure non-violence on the part of the strikers and to increase their staying power, Gandhiji recommended that the strikers should acquire skill in a variety of manual crafts so that they did not have to depend altogether upon the strike fund to keep themselves and their families going during a prolonged strike.[291] "A working knowledge of a variety of occupations," he held, "is to the working class what metal is to the capitalist."[292] It gives to the worker the strength and versatility which his fluid assets give to the capitalist. The readiness and ability of the strikers to perform socially useful labour also forges a bond of sympathy between them and the public and provides a basis for non-violent organisation of labour. During a strike it keeps up their morale as nothing else.

Would not "the legal fiction of trusteeship", as a cynic put it, only serve to give to the institution of private ownership a new lease of life? Why not put all property straightaway under State ownership since the accumulation of capital is essentially the fruit of exploitation, i.e. violence? Gandhiji was once asked this question. He replied that whilst

he agreed that the accumulation of capital by the individual in the present set up is largely the fruit of exploitation, i.e. violence, he preferred the violence of the individual to State violence as the lesser of the two evils. "The State represents violence in a concentrated and organised form. The individual has a soul, but the State is a soulless machine. . . . It is my firm conviction that if the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time."[293] Again, while many instances could be cited, where men had adopted trusteeship, there was none, he argued, "where the State has really lived for the poor."[294] He would therefore favour "not a centralisation of power in the hands of the State, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship as, in my opinion, the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State."[295] However, if it was unavoidable, he would support "a minimum of State ownership".

Why not conscript the surplus wealth through a steeply graded system of taxation? Gandhiji's answer to this is that certainly the State can conscript wealth but it cannot conscript the talent and goodwill of the privileged class. Trusteeship, on the other hand, while it gives capitalism no quarter, it gives to the capitalists the moral freedom to develop and use their talents for the service of society and thereby makes it possible to annex their goodwill for the amelioration of the masses. There is nothing that can be realised by a violent revolution and is intrinsically good but can be achieved in an equal or even greater measure by the application of the principle of trusteeship. In addition, trusteeship avoids the evils of violence, regimentation and suppression of individual liberty. Even if large sectors of industry were nationalised and put under State ownership, the existence of individual enterprise alongside of it under a trusteeship system would provide a healthy antidote to slackness, inefficiency, corruption, lack of enterprise and bureaucratic autocracy which very often characterise State enterprise. Trusteeship alone thus provides a possible escape from the dilemma: "Make men free and they become unequal, make them equal and they cease to be free."

Could not the trusteeship doctrine be used to justify one nation constituting itself into a "trustee" of another? The reply is that "trusteeship" is a means for remedying recurring inequalities that are inevitable in nature, not an excuse for creating inequalities artificially, to be able to play at "trusteeship". That would be a travesty of its true meaning and purpose.

There is yet another reason why Gandhiji was in favour of trusteeship. He was strongly opposed to increasing occasions for State interference in the regulation of society. He attached the greatest importance to "moral freedom". He wanted reform to grow from within. "I look upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear," he said, "because, while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation,

it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress."[296]

Jung has referred to the danger of increase of the "fiction which one calls the State", viz. that State is "a sort of superindividual endowed with inexhaustible power and resourcefulness" which can accomplish what nobody would expect from an individual. "The dangerous incline leading down to mass psychology," he observes, "begins with this plausible thinking in big numbers and powerful organisations, where the individual dwindles away to mere nothingness. . . . Everything that exceeds a certain human size evokes equally inhuman powers in man's unconscious" and thereby unleashes the "totalitarian demons".[297] Gandhiji was, therefore, against vesting more power in the State than was absolutely necessary, or encouraging people to think that their salvation could come through some agency outside themselves. On the contrary he told them that the State gave back to the people only what it received from them: they were the source of the State's bounty. They must, therefore, realise their moral freedom without which economic and political freedom is incomplete.

20

During our last detention at Poona in 1942, I had the opportunity to discuss at length with Gandhiji various aspects of his ideal of trusteeship, and how it could be realised in our present-day world. In the course of our talk one day he remarked: "The only democratic way of achieving it today is by cultivating opinion in its favour."

I put it to him that perhaps the reason why he had presented trusteeship basis to the owning class was that while non-violence could command many sacrifices from the people, it was not reasonable to expect anyone to present his own head in a charger. "So instead of asking the owning class to do the impossible, you presented them with a reasonable and practicable alternative."

Gandhiji: "I refuse to admit that non-violence knows any limit to the sacrifice that it can demand or command. The doctrine of trusteeship stands on its own merits."

Pyarelal: "Surely, you do not mean that the change would depend upon the sufferance of the owning class and we shall have to wait till their conversion is complete? If social transformation is effected by a slow, gradual process, it will kill the revolutionary fervour which an abrupt break with the past creates. That is why our Marxist friends say that a true social revolution can come only through a proletarian dictatorship. You too have taught us that in politics reformism kills revolution. Does this not equally apply to social change? Anyway, if non-violence has the power to induce the opponent even to immolate

himself for the sake of a higher principle, as you maintain that it can, why cannot we get the owning class to renounce their vast possessions? You concede that vast possessions are today largely the result of exploitation? Why bring in trusteeship? Many people honestly believe, it will prove to be no more than a make-believe. Or is it that, after all, there is a limit to the power of non-violence?"

Gandhiji: "Perhaps you have the example of Russia in mind. Wholesale expropriation of the owning class and distribution of its assets among the people there did create a tremendous amount of revolutionary fervour. But I claim that ours will be an even bigger revolution. We must not underrate the business talent and know-how which the owning class have acquired through generations of experience and specialisation. Free use of it would accrue to the people under my plan. So long as we have no power, conversion is our weapon by necessity, but after we get power, conversion will be our weapon of choice. Conversion must precede legislation. Legislation in the absence of conversion remains a dead letter. As an illustration, we have today the power to enforce rules of sanitation but we can do nothing with it because the public is not ready."

Pyarelal: "You say conversion must precede reform. Whose conversion? If you mean the conversion of the people, they are ready even today. If, on the other hand, you mean that of the owning class, we may as well wait till the Greek Kalends."

Gandhiji: "I mean the conversion of both."

Noting the look of surprise on my face, he proceeded: "You see, if the owning class does not accept the trusteeship basis voluntarily, its conversion must come under the pressure of public opinion. For that public opinion is not yet sufficiently organised."

Going back to what he had said only a little while ago, I asked: "What do you mean by power?"

Gandhiji: "By power I mean voting power for the people—so broad-based that the will of the majority can be given effect to."

Pyarelal: "Can the masses at all come into power by parliamentary activity?"

Gandhiji: "Not by parliamentary activity *alone*. My reliance ultimately is on the power of non-violent non-cooperation, which I have been trying to build up for the last twenty-two years."

Pyarelal: "Is the capture of power possible through non-violence? Our Socialist friends say that they have now been convinced of the matchless potency of non-violence—up to a point. But they say, they do not see how it can enable the people to seize power. You also have said the same thing. Therein, argue the Socialists, lies the inadequacy of non-violence."

Gandhiji: "In a way they are right. By its very nature, non-violence cannot 'seize' power, nor can that be its goal. *But non-violence can do more;*

it can effectively control and guide power without capturing the machinery of Government. That is its beauty. There is an exception of course. If the non-violent non-cooperation of the people is so complete that the administration ceases to function or if the administration crumbles under the impact of a foreign invasion and a vacuum results, the people's representatives will then step in and fill it. Theoretically that is possible."

It reminded me of what Gandhiji had once told Mirabehn: "Non-violence does not seize power. It does not even seek power; power accrues to it."[298]

Continuing his argument Gandhiji said: "Moreover, I do not agree that Government cannot be carried on except by the use of violence."

Pyarelal: "Does not the very concept of the State imply the use of power?"

Gandhiji: "Yes. But the use of power need not necessarily be violent. A father wields power over his children; he may even punish but not by inflicting violence. The most effective exercise of power is that which irks least. Power rightly exercised must sit light as a flower; no-one should feel the weight of it. The people accepted the authority of the Congress willingly. I was on more than one occasion invested with the absolute power of dictatorship. But everybody knew that my power rested on their willing acceptance. They could set me aside at any time and I would have stepped aside without a murmur. In the Khilafat days my authority, or the authority of the Congress, did not irk anybody. The Ali Brothers used to call me *sarkar*. Yet they knew they had me in their pocket. What was true about me or the Congress then can be true about the Government also."

I conceded that a non-violent State or even a non-violent minority dictatorship—a dictatorship resting on the moral authority of a few—was possible in theory. But it called for a terrible self-discipline, self-denial and penance. In the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavata*, there is the description of a non-violent law-giver or head of a State. He is a person who has severed all domestic ties; he is unaffected by fear or favour, anger or attachment; he is the personification of humility and self-effacement. Through constant discipline he has inured his body to all conceivable rigours of the weather, fatigue and want. But suppose, the author poses the question, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. If through old age or illness his constitution is undermined so that he can no longer withstand the rigours of his penance, what then? To that hypothetical question the unrelenting answer given is: Let him in that event mount a pyre which he himself has made and immolate himself rather than indulge in weak self-pity and mollycoddle himself. "Personally I agree," I concluded, "that such a person alone is fit to be a dictator under non-violence. If anyone is frightened

by such a description, let him look at the Russians fighting in temperatures below 40 degrees frost. Why should we expect a softer solution under non-violence? Rather we should be prepared for more hardships."

Gandhiji confirmed that under non-violence people have to be prepared for heavier sacrifices if only because the goal aimed at is higher. "There is no short-cut to salvation," he said.

"That would mean," interpolated my sister, "that only a Jesus, a Mohammad or a Buddha can be the head of a non-violent State."

Gandhiji demurred. "That is not correct. Prophets and supermen are born only once in an age. But if even a single individual realises the ideal of Ahimsa in its fullness, he covers and redeems the whole society. Once Jesus had blazed the trail, his twelve disciples could carry on his mission without his presence. It needed the perseverance and genius of so many generations of scientists to discover the laws of electricity but today everybody, even children, use electric power in their daily life. Similarly, it will not always need a perfect being to administer an ideal State, once it has come into being. What is needed is a thorough social awakening to begin with. The rest will follow. To take an instance nearer home, I have presented to the working class the truth that true capital is not silver or gold but the labour of their hands and feet and their intelligence. Once labour develops that awareness, it would not need my presence to enable it to make use of the power that it will release."

He ended up by saying that if only we could make people conscious of their power—the power of non-violent non-cooperation —the realisation of the ideal of trusteeship would follow as surely as morning follows night.

21

On our release from prison, we took up the question where we had left it in the Detention Camp. Two senior members of the Ashram, Kishorlal Mashruwala and Narahari Parikh, joined. Professor Dantwala from Bombay had sent the draft of a simple, practical trusteeship formula which he had prepared. It was placed before Gandhiji, who made a few changes in it. The final draft, as amended by him, read as follows:

1. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.

2. It does not recognise any right of private ownership of property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.

3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.

4. Thus, under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of society.

5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that could be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.

6. Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.

It was decided to release the formula to the Press. But on second thoughts we felt that before publication it might be shown to G. D. Birla who was favourably inclined to the doctrine of trusteeship. A copy was accordingly sent to him. He welcomed it but proposed that in order that the whole effort might not begin and end with the publication of the formula, he should first canvass some fellow-capitalists so that the announcement about their acceptance should be made along with the publication of the draft.

No further communication from him, however, followed. Perhaps he met with discouraging response from those whom he had approached. But a great idea rooted in the genius and hoary tradition of a people never dies. Gandhiji's idea is today reborn and is being pursued with spectacular success by Vinoba Bhave. It promises to usher in the "thorough social awakening" of which Gandhiji had prophetically talked on the 13th December, 1942, in the Detention Camp at Poona, and to become the spear-head of a non-violent revolution whose implications reach far and wide. Millions of acres of land and thousands of villages have been donated as willing gifts for the use of the land-hungry toiling poor. The original limited objective of asking for and obtaining land gifts has since been expanded by the addition of various other kinds of contribution envisaged under the trusteeship principle, e.g. donation of cash, of free labour, specialised knowledge or technical skill, and finally the donation of one's life in dedication to the service of the masses.

Donation of whole villages to the movement by the collective decision of the villagers constitutes an important milestone in the development of the movement. Bhoodan is not an end in itself. It is only the means to an end. It is not merely the transfer of land from one hand to another that constitutes the core of the Bhoodan revolution but development of the full function of land which this makes possible. A farming community may be prosperous but when this prosperity is secured by the import of cheap fertilisers, or food for animals and men, not necessarily below the financial cost, but below the "biological cost" of production, the farmer's gain represents the loss of soil fertility somewhere else. In the case of a completely self-contained community, which produces all its supplies in food for men, animals and crops, any surplus that can be disposed of represents not only clear gain to the producers but also to the country and to the world at large. Self-sufficiency in food is justified only when it makes for increased food production for world as a whole, and food of better quality. If it fails to achieve that end, there is something wrong with its organisation. Utilisation of night-soil, farm-yard waste and refuse of every kind by composting would constitute the starting point and rock-bottom foundation of the effort for the regeneration of soil and attainment of self-sufficiency.

The chronic poverty and backwardness of the Indian village is principally due to the triple drain to which it has long been subjected, viz. the drain of raw-material, the monetary drain and the drain of talent due to migration of the flower of the village community to the towns. The village cannot regain its pristine prosperity and vigour so long as this triple drain remains unchecked. No-one puts money into pockets that have holes. The holes must be stopped first.

The drain of raw material is caused by the need to pay Government dues, or to pay for goods and services of urban origin. The *Gramdan* villages will therefore have to take every care to learn to do so far as possible with village products only and to keep out city manufactures. To stop the monetary drain they will organise a system of rural health services. The emphasis in these will be on prevention rather than cure, on the inculcation of right health behaviour rather than on wonder cures of modern medicine and surgery. Nature-cure, supplemented by simple drugs and medicinal herbs, which the people will be encouraged to grow in the village itself, will provide all the medical care that the vast bulk of them may need. The personnel for these health services will be recruited from and trained in the villages themselves. Donations of specialised knowledge and skill by those who have them in an ample measure will provide the knowhow. There may not be any big hospitals with costly up-to-date paraphernalia. It will be enough to have one well-equipped central hospital in each area linked to a chain of rural health clinics, where

locally trained personnel will treat the vast majority of simple cases under the guidance and supervision of an experienced peripatetic physician. Rural universities organised on Basic Education lines will set up faculties not in academic branches of learning but in such practical subjects as agriculture, dairying, sericulture and bee-keeping, village engineering, tanning, sanitation, rural health and rural medicine, pedagogy and social sciences etc. to train workers needed for rural reconstruction.

Everybody will have employment to enable him to pay in kind or in labour for medical care for himself and his family and for education for his children. This coupled with a system of collective insurance for old age, sickness etc. backed by the resources of the village community will obviate the need for high cash salaries.

If there is not enough donated land for everybody, those who are without land will be helped to engage in the exploitation of other natural resources, e.g. salt manufacture, where facilities for it exist. Nature is as much "land" as soil. The initial capital for such occupations will be found from *sampatti-dan* or donations of wealth.

A regional unit, or block of villages, organised on these lines will ban the erection of rice-hullers, flour mills, and power-driven oil presses within its boundaries and get the existing ones eliminated so that the rural population does not lose the essential advantage of its way of life in the form of fresh, whole, unadulterated foods. Similarly, they will not countenance turning into cash of dairy products or of fruit and vegetables grown in the village by canning or otherwise for export so long as everybody has not had a sufficiency of these. Only after this has been ensured to everybody will they think of exporting the surplus—fresh, cured or canned.

It should be possible for people in such an environment to build themselves out of locally available material neat, airy, spacious huts, with a smokeless kitchen and a flower, vegetable and fruit orchard attached to each according to a carefully laid out plan. There will be proper drainage for individual homes and for the village, wide alleys, neat village roads—not necessarily motorable—and well-kept inland waterways where these exist, cheap rather than quick transport being the desideratum of village life.

With villages thus renovated, beautified and turned into busy hives of social, cultural and economic activity, providing ample opportunity for self-expression and aesthetic enjoyment so that a healthy, cultured, well-rounded life for oneself and one's children is brought within the reach of all, the money motive will lose much of its drive and the temptation for the flower of the village to migrate or for the village people to send their children to the cities for education or earning a living will be greatly lessened if not altogether eliminated.

In a biologically whole and self-contained farming community,

production will be governed not by business considerations but by the sole consideration of building up vitality. In order to achieve independence of money-economy, a self-contained community will ask the Government to be allowed to pay its land dues in the form of a fixed share of the gross produce as a matter of elementary justice, and other dues in kind or in labour. A wise Government would not be averse to favourably considering such a request since this would enable grain to be stocked in the villages and provide an insurance against scarcity by whatever cause induced. These local stocks of grain would also enable the authorities to meet any expenditure that they might have to incur in the rural areas without drawing upon its reserve of hard currency which would thus become available for meeting external needs.

Having attained self-sufficiency in the matter of its essential needs and freedom from money economy, these rural communities or regional units will set about to organise their own system of watch and ward, based on the principle of Satyagraha, for the maintenance of the internal security of the village. A number of villages combining together for the purpose will organise collective security for the whole block on the same basis. Panchayat justice backed by non-violent social organisation will effectively replace and put an end to litigation in the law courts.

Donation of villages or *Gramdan* thus provides an opportunity, especially where donated villages form solid blocks, to try out all the techniques devised by Gandhiji from time to time to enable the toiling masses in the villages to retain and enjoy their full share of nature's bounty and the fruits of their toil against any combination of vested interests, however well entrenched, and powerful, and to realise on a regional scale, the full picture of a non-violent, non-exploiting egalitarian society.

A compact sizable area where community life has been organised on these lines will have created for itself a moral basis to claim exemption from being involved in a crushing system of taxation meant to sustain a top-heavy administration with its ever-growing parasitic hierarchy of privilege holders,[299] its suicidal race for armaments and grandiose schemes, more concerned with production than with the producers, which can have no significance for a self-governing, self-contained and self-sustained community in which a wageless system of economy provides to everybody who is willing to exert himself all the necessaries of life "free like God's air, sunshine and water", and in which neither the police nor the military nor the law courts have any function.

The question may however be asked: Would any Government tolerate this? Can any constituted Government be expected to co-operate in its own liquidation? The answer is: Why not, if the rulers

are pledged to hold power and use it solely on behalf of and for the people? "There will never be a really free and enlightened State," observed Thoreau, "until the State comes to recognise the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbour; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbours and fellow-men. A State which bore this kind of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen."[300]

To realise this ideal of a self-sustained, self-governed, non-violent rural community in India's villages, Gandhiji envisaged a special type of worker. He would approximate the description of a Satyagrahi worker given by him in a slightly different context: "He would be bound with the poorest in the village by ties of service. He would constitute himself the scavenger, the nurse, the arbitrator of disputes, and the teacher of the children of the village. Everyone, young and old, would know him; though a householder he would be leading a life of restraint; he would make no distinction between his and his neighbour's children; he would own nothing but would hold what wealth he has in trust for others, and would therefore spend out of it just sufficient for his barest needs. His needs would, as far as possible, approximate those of the poor, he would harbour no untouchability, and would therefore inspire people of all castes and creeds to approach him with confidence."[301]

Such a worker would further "always endeavour to come up to, whenever he falls short of the ideal, fill in the gaps in his education, will not waste a single moment. His house will be a busy hive of useful activities centering round spinning. His will be a well ordered household."[302]

Though he might be all alone to begin with, such a worker, said Gandhiji, if he had the requisite degree of faith, intelligence, industry and perseverance "will not find himself single-handed, for long. The village will unconsciously follow him. But whether they do or not, at a time of emergency he will, single-handed, effectively deal with it or die in the attempt. But I firmly hold that he will have converted a number of others."[303]

It was Gandhiji's ambition to play the role of that solitary Satyagrahi worker in Sevagram. Asked whether he had succeeded in creating any inhabitant of that village into a Satyagrahi of his conception, he replied, he did not know, but he hoped that some of them were "unconsciously shaping themselves as such." As to Sevagram shaping into

the ideal village of his dreams, he remarked: "I know that the work is as difficult as to make of India an ideal country. . . . But if one can produce one ideal village, he will have provided a pattern not only for the whole country but perhaps for the whole world. More than this a seeker may not aspire after."[304]

Out of such effort will emerge something which will be unlike anything that the world has so far known, "a new wholeness or harmony in the world of life, which is now so broken up and divided against itself."[305] Its influence will spread far and wide and, may be, even across national frontiers.

CHAPTER XXII

SETTING DEMOCRACY ON THE MARCH

1

THOSE WHO have read Carlyle's history of the French Revolution will recall a remarkable passage in which the author has described how after "six long years of insurrection and tribulation . . . struggling and . . . daring . . . destroying of Bastilles, discomfiting of Brunswicks, fronting of Principalities and Powers" the portion of the poor proletariat of Paris was only a plate containing each "three grilled herrings, sprinkled with shorn onions, wetted with a little vinegar; to this add some morsel of boiled prunes, and lentils swimming in a clear sauce. . . . Seine water, rushing plenteous by, will supply the deficiency."[1] Their allotment of daily bread had sunk to one ounce and a half. Even so, "wide-waving, doleful are the Baker's Queues; Farmers' houses are becoming pawnbrokers' shops."[2] Not even during the Reign of Terror had they suffered more. Yet at this very time "Salons Soupers not Fraternal" were beaming with most "suitable effulgence, very singular in colour" and the moneyed Citoyen of Paris was pondering "in what elegantest style he shall dress himself!"[3]

To many who beheld men, women and even children fighting for a place in the long queues before ration shops in the capital of the Indian Union during the winter of 1947-48, these scenes must have seemed reminiscent of the baker's queues of post-revolutionary Paris described by Carlyle.

But then in France the millennium had come through violence and the revolution had negated itself by virtue of its association with incompatible means. "Thus men break the axe with which they have done hateful things; the axe itself having grown hateful."[4] In India, independence had come largely through the people's bloodless struggle. Such independence should have enabled them to solve their problems that had baffled solution under foreign rule.

As it was, these problems became even more acute after independence. Corruption was never more rampant. The administration continued to be carried on essentially in the same style as before and the popular Government instead of striking an original line continued to follow, and in some respects even improved upon, the discredited

old tradition which not only Congressmen but all nationalists had condemned before.

There was the same woodenness, red-tapism, and waste. While in post-war England and France they were adopting rigorous austerity budgets and slashing all unnecessary expenditure, the Union Government in the exuberance of its new-found independence was doing the opposite.

"We are going in for British extravagance which the country cannot afford," wrote Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru in one of his letters.[5] A few days later he again wrote: "I feel that the Viceroy should be allowed to go to an unpretentious house and that the present palace should be more usefully used."[6] Pandit Nehru agreed. Mountbatten was willing — even enthusiastic. "May I say," wrote Gandhiji to Mountbatten, "how deeply I have appreciated your wish to go to an unpretentious house as the chosen Governor-General of the millions of the half-famished villagers of the nation. I hope it will be possible to carry out the wishes."[7] But, explained Pandit Nehru in a letter written on the same day, "difficulty in finding suitable accommodation and making arrangements for changing over, when we are so busy" stood in the way.[8] That could not have been the whole reason, for even after the installation of the Indian Governor-General, no change was made either in the residence or the style of its upkeep. We were even told that the standard maintained at the Government House was considered "inadequate" by foreign dignitaries.

Gandhiji was disappointed but he distilled "the soul of goodness" even out of his disappointment. During the hectic days, when Delhi had become the City of the Dead, he was, in the course of a meeting with the Governor-General, shown how the Government House provided a quiet retreat for the Emergency Committee to meet and hold its deliberations away from the riots and clamour of the streets. Recalling his earlier advice to Mountbatten, he remarked to him: "Never mind the reason why you did not move to a smaller house. When I see the Emergency Committee at work in the undisturbed tranquillity of this place, I say to myself: 'Perhaps God was wiser than us all. For it is but right that the Emergency Committee should be able to meet in a place where wise decisions can be taken in the right atmosphere'."[9]

As a vindication of God's wisdom, which turns even men's errors to good account, this was all right. But it provided no vindication for the ways of man, or turn what was intrinsically bad into good. Gandhiji continued to note with growing uneasiness the unchecked administrative waste and lavish expenditure, when millions were suffering untold hardships. Nothing escaped his watchful eye—the expenditure incurred by embassies abroad; furniture installed in the residences of Cabinet Ministers; the conduct of the nation's representatives in the capitals of foreign countries, and so on. From time to time he sounded a note

of warning. "The accounts I receive about you," he wrote to one of our Ambassadors abroad, "show that you are not living the life that India would expect of you. Can it be?"

He was sure, he remarked to a friend at Delhi in the summer of 1947, that if all Ministers voluntarily adopted the ideal of simplicity, they would capture the imagination of the world and win the people's confidence which nothing and nobody would be able to shake or destroy. But instead, their Governors and Ministers needed palatial buildings, an imposing array of body-guards, and liveried khidmutgars. Dinner parties were regarded as an essential part of the gubernatorial ceremonial. "I fail to understand all this. What is more detrimental to the country's prestige—lack of food, clothing and shelter for the countless people of India, or living in a simple style in unostentatious small houses, instead of costly, imposing piles out of keeping with their surroundings, by our Ministers and Governors?"

If he had his way, he went on to say, he would immediately stop the practice of holding dinner parties in the Government House "when the people are experiencing acute food shortage." He would provide the Ministers with cosy, small, unostentatious houses but no armed body-guards either to Congress Governors or to Ministers, "who are committed to non-violence as their policy. And if as a result some of them should get killed, I would not mind." In *Harijan* he wrote:

> An Indian Governor should, in his own person and in his surroundings, be a teetotaller. Without this, prohibition of the fiery liquid is well-nigh inconceivable.
>
> He and his surroundings should represent hand-spinning as a visible token of identification with the dumb millions of India, a token of the necessity of "bread labour" and organised Non-violence as against organised violence on which the society of to-day seems to be based.
>
> He must dwell in a cottage accessible to all, though easily shielded from gaze, if he is to do efficient work. The British Governor naturally represented British might. For him and his was erected a fortified residence—a palace to be occupied by him and his numerous vassals who sustained his Empire. The Indian prototype may keep somewhat pretentious buildings for receiving princes and ambassadors of the world. For these, (they) being guests of the Governor, should constitute an education in what "Even Unto This Last"—equality of all—should mean in concrete terms. For him no expensive furniture, foreign or indigenous. Plain living and high thinking must be his motto, not to adorn his entrance but to be exemplified in daily life.
>
> For him there can be no untouchability in any form whatsoever, no caste or creed or colour distinction. He must represent

> the best of all religions and all things Eastern or Western. Being a citizen of India, he must be a citizen of the world. . . . Thus lived . . . the Master of Eton in his residence in the midst of and surrounded by the sons of the Lords and Nabobs of the British Isles. Will the Governors of India of the famished millions do less? . . .
>
> One would expect that the Britishers who have been chosen by Indian representatives as Governors and who have taken the oath of fealty to India and her millions would endeavour as far as possible to live the life an Indian Governor is expected to live. They will represent the best that their country has to give to India and the world.[10]

Congress leaders had been fighters in their time. But they lacked administrative experience when they stepped into office. There were brilliant exceptions, especially at the top, who made up by the sheer versatility of their genius their lack of previous training in administration. But on the whole, when they took up office, they found themselves new to the task. The only thing that stood between them and chaos was the administrative machine set up by the British. They began to lean heavily upon the British trained services—secretaries, departmental heads and so on—and became their ardent admirers. Some of them even took to imitating their ways and became intolerant of any criticism of their officers by their erstwhile comrades-in-arms—the field workers. A distance grew up between the two.

This was the price that India had to pay for the continuity of administration. It ensured a smooth transition and the country was spared the inconveniences of a temporary dislocation, perhaps a spell of chaos. But it prolonged the agony of the old system of rule. The alternative would have been to make a complete break with the past and start building anew from below. The disturbances and cataclysms preceding and following independence left hardly any breathing time for this. All that they could by a supreme effort, manage was to keep their heads above the onrushing tide of chaos, which threatened to engulf them and the ship of the State.

In academic brilliance, patriotism, and spirit of service, the members of the services individually were second perhaps to none. It was no fault of theirs that they represented the outlook and characteristics peculiar to their class. A fearful gulf yawned between them and the people. They were out of touch, and one is afraid, out of sympathy with the outlook and the way of life of the millions in India's villages. They were a bureaucracy and could function only as such. Their mastery of the administrative routine did not qualify them for building up democracy from the foundation.

The Union Government, after the long history of repression and

frustration under the British rule, developed early a weakness—by no means peculiar to it—for State planning. There was a plethora of ambitious plans and blue-prints—an impatience to achieve prosperity and power by following "push-button" methods. The *elite* and the intellectual urban class from which the bulk of the leadership and services were drawn, went all out for it. This kind of planning has an irresistible fascination for the town-bred intellectuals. It enables privilege to be equated with patriotism and progress with the satisfaction of urban values and the sophisticated way of life in which they have grown up and which in consequence have grown upon them. The rural masses will have ample opportunities to jack themselves up to the urban level of culture and civilisation, by providing voluntary labour. In brief, it means political and social domination of the town, and power and much coveted perquisites for the *elite*, who constitute the ruling class. Even so, some British bureaucrats in the early eighties of the last century used to style themselves as "Socialists", and to point to the vast irrigation and communications systems of India, created by the British, as a triumph of "State socialism in action"! One of them in a publication under the Henry George Society later actually described the notorious land tax, which was a tax on sweat and toil, as a vindication of Henry George's principle of "single tax"!

The Congress had in the past denounced the evil of paternalistic rule under the *ma-bap* British Government. It had killed the people's initiative, deepened their inertia and habit of helpless dependence on an outside authority for any amelioration of their condition. But when Congress leaders themselves became the Government, they assumed under the fashionable label of "Welfare State" the very role which they had previously denounced. They were convinced that, whatever might have been the case under foreign rule, with them in power everything would turn out well. Any suggestion to the contrary was resented as an aspersion on their past record of patriotism and service. Gandhiji felt uneasy. The universal experience is that where there is increasing dependence on the State, its inevitable result is that "the people become a herd of sheep, always relying on a shepherd to drive them on to good pastures; the shepherd's staff soon becomes a rod of iron, and the shepherds turn into wolves."[11]

Granting that the Congress leaders, who had grown up in the tradition of the freedom struggle, might during their tenure of office, or in their lifetime, succeed in keeping under check some of the worst evils of bureaucratisation and the totalitarian trend inherent in central planning, what guarantee was there that their successors who would grow up under a different tradition would not succumb to the system of which they were a part? Is not the system always more than the man? Gandhiji was uncompromisingly opposed to the extension of the sphere of State activity under a national welfare State no less than under a

benevolent foreign bureaucracy. "Self-government means continuous effort to be independent of Government control whether it is foreign Government or whether it is national," he had written. "Swaraj Government will be a sorry affair if people look up to it for the regulation of every detail of life."[12] And again: "Where administration is in foreign hands, whatever comes to the people comes from top and thus they become more and more dependent. Where it is broad-based on popular will, everything goes from bottom upward and hence it lasts. It is good-looking and strengthens the people."[13]

It is not possible for the *elite* to become rural-minded and think and plan in terms of the poorest living in the villages, unless they themselves go and live in their midst and make their own way of life commensurate with theirs, any more than it was for the French Bourbon Princess to understand why the Paris mob did not eat cakes when she was told they were shouting for bread. The habit, conscious or unconscious, of class thinking sticks to us. Our environment conditions us. Gandhiji had long made himself *declasse* and deliberately renounced the privileges and prerogatives of the intellectual urban class sanctified under the name of "progress". He had assiduously tried to become a villager in his outlook and way of life. It was characteristic of him that when Lord Lothian, later British Ambassador in the U. S. A., sought an interview with him in 1937, he invited Lord Lothian to come and see him in his Ashram at Sevagram, although both of them were at that time in Bombay. On being asked afterwards, why he had put his visitor to the trouble of travelling all the way to Sevagram, he replied: "The language I wanted to speak to him would not have come to me while I was staying in Birla House at Bombay. What is more, he would not have been able to understand my language away from the environment of Sevagram." Naturally his ideas of planning differed from those of the *elite.*

There are two approaches to planning. There is planning for power and prestige and there is planning for peace and plenty. Centralised planning, sometimes also called national planning, comes under the first category. Gandhiji too had a philosophy of planning. But it was planning from below by the people of their own lives in the way *they* thought best; not execution of blue-prints of what others thought to be best for them. Under it, not the cities but the villages held the key-position.

Nationalism, like patriotism, is a much abused word. It has often in the past been used to advance sectional interests at the expense of the common man. Gandhiji refused to recognise the distinction between the indigenous and the foreign as such. It was a false distinction. In free India, he said, "all interests not in conflict with the interests of the dumb millions" would "be scrupulously respected."[14] On the other hand no interest that was in conflict with these would be regarded

as sacrosanct because it was labelled "Indian" or "national". As he put it at the Round Table Conference, "it will be . . . a battle between the haves and the have-nots."

Aldous Huxley in his *Science, Liberty and Peace* has referred to the revival "in an up-to-date, pseudo-scientific and this-worldly form" of the old Jewish and Christian apocalypticism, as a result of faith in the dogma of progress, that has affected contemporary political life: "A glorious destiny awaits mankind, a coming Golden Age, in which more ingenious gadgets . . . will somehow have created a race of better and brighter human beings." It is a highly significant fact, he adds, that "all modern dictators, whether of the Right or of the Left, talk incessantly about the golden Future," and justify anything and everything on the ground that they are "means to that glorious end. But the one thing we all know about the future is that we are completely ignorant of what is going to happen, and that what does in fact happen is often very different from what we anticipated. Consequently any faith based upon hypothetical occurrences a long time hence must always, in the very nature of things, be hopelessly unrealistic."[15] Today after decades of most elaborate planning that the present age has seen, we find still Nikita Khruschev of U.S.S.R. declaring in the Supreme Soviet that it would be another five or seven years before the Russian industry would be able to "fully satisfy . . . footwear and fabric requirements" of the country, and ten or twelve years before there would be an end to Russia's acute housing shortage.[16]

"In practice," observes Aldous Huxley, "faith in the bigger and better future is one of the most potent enemies to present liberty."[17] Gandhiji had an innate distrust of plans that related mainly to the future. He always weighed promises of "jam tomorrow" in the scale of "bread and butter today". There is an ever present danger of grandiose planning from above becoming an excuse for the continuation of class privileges. Widening the circle of privilege by admitting fresh partners into the charmed circle is not the way to abolish privilege. The haves must be prepared not only to share what they have with the have-nots but also to share with the latter their handicaps so long as they remain unremoved and to forego what all cannot have. Then there would be no easy-going self-complacency that regards the denial of elementary amenities to large sections of the people at the base of the pyramid as something that would take care of itself in God's good time but which cannot be allowed to hold up the march of "progress". Planning, Gandhiji insisted, must grow out of the people's felt needs and begin with the neglected primary needs of the poorest. Till these were satisfied, everything else must wait. When the people had gained more experience and their means had increased, it would be open to them to add more ambitious items if they so wished. Such planning automatically adjusts itself to the means of the people and pays its

way to prosperity as it develops. The people know at every step what they are about or in for. There are no big hazards, no incalculable risks to upset all anticipations. It helps build, too, in the process of economic reconstruction the character of the people on which alone the foundations of true national prosperity can rest. Participation in the effort for self-amelioration is directly converted into health and vigour and intelligence. Its glow is felt even by the weakest, instead of the weakest being sacrificed to the notion of "progress". Progress does not spell an endless succession of hardships and sacrifices to the poorest in the immediate present to be balanced by the joys of an earthy paradise in the promised Utopia which may or may not arrive, while the ruling class and its ever-growing hierarchy of henchmen continue securely to enjoy the fruits of progress.

Gandhiji set forth the picture of his plan as follows:

> An ideal Indian village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation built of material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The cottages will have courtyards enabling householders to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lanes and streets will be free of all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a cooperative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education will be the central fact, and it will have Panchayats for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own Khadi. This is roughly my idea of a model village. . . . Given . . . cooperation among the people, *almost the whole of the programme* other than model cottages *can be worked out at an expenditure within the means of the villagers . . . without Government assistance.* With the assistance there is no limit to the possibility of village reconstruction. . . . My task just now is to discover what the villagers can do to help themselves if they have mutual cooperation and contribute voluntary labour for the common good. *I am convinced that they can under intelligent guidance, double the village income as distinguished from individual income. There are in our villages inexhaustible resources not for commercial purposes in every case but certainly for local purposes in almost every case.* The greatest tragedy is the hopeless unwillingness of the villagers to better their lot.[18] (Italics mine)

This calls for a different approach to planning, a different kind of outlook and preparation on the part of the servants of the nation. "We must identify ourselves with the villagers who toil under the hot sun beating on their bent backs and see how we would like to drink water

from the pool in which the villagers bathe, and wash their clothes and pots, and in which their cattle drink and roll. Then and not till then shall we truly represent the masses and they will, as surely as I am writing this, respond to every call."[19]

"Hitherto the villagers have died in their thousands," Gandhiji told the *elite*, "so that we might live. Now we might have to die so that they may live. . . . The former have died unknowingly and involuntarily. Their enforced sacrifice has degraded us. If now we die knowingly and willingly, our sacrifice will ennoble us and the whole nation."[20] "The golden rule to apply in all such cases is resolutely to refuse to have what millions cannot."[21] "We should be ashamed of resting or having a square meal so long as there is one able-bodied man or woman without work or food."[22]

This ability would not descend upon them all of a sudden, he warned. "The first thing is to cultivate the mental attitude that will not have possessions or facilities denied to millions, and the next immediate thing is to rearrange our lives as fast as possible in accordance with that mentality."[23]

They might find this trying at first. "The village work frightens us. We who are town-bred find it trying to take to the village life. Our bodies in many cases do not respond to the hard life."[24] But this was a difficulty that had to be faced "boldly, even heroically" if their desire really was to establish Swaraj for the masses, not substitute one class rule for another. "The only way is to sit down in their midst and work away in steadfast faith, as their scavengers, their nurses, their servants, not as their patrons, and to forget . . . the 'haves'. . . . Let us tackle the humbler work of the village."[25]

This did not make for power as that term is commonly understood, but it promised to remove hunger, ignorance and want from the land in the quickest time and ensure individual freedom, health and abundance for all. It required the leaders and the civil servants to live down to the level of the people and think and plan in terms of the latter's every-day experience. First things would come first. Ambitious vistas of national glory and power would wait. This prospect did not enthuse them.

While the fight against the British was on, the Congress leaders were interested in developing the non-violent sanction. After coming to power they lost interest in it. They had now the more handy machinery of the State at their command. The non-violent power of the masses can prove a double-edged weapon if the rulers are not very careful as to the path they choose to tread. The Congress leaders after they became Government fought shy of it and of constructive work as conceived by Gandhiji, except in so far as it had a mass appeal and value at the hustings. The people smelt the change and became restive.

Complained one embittered correspondent: "India has reached the present state on the strength of Gandhiji's ideals and practice based on them. But is it not clear that we are kicking the very ladder by which we have mounted so high? Where are Hindu-Muslim unity, Hindustani, Khadi, village industries? Is not any talk about them hypocrisy?" Had not the Congress leaders virtually buried Gandhiji alive? he asked.

Writing under the caption "Is He Buried Alive?" Gandhiji replied in *Harijan*: "I cling to the hope that I am not yet buried alive. The hope rests on the belief that the masses have not lost faith in them (his ideals). When it is proved that they have, they will be lost and I can then be said to have been buried alive. *But so long as my faith burns bright, as I hope it will even if I stand alone, I shall be alive in the grave and what is more, speaking from it.*"[26] (Italics mine).

In the past when they had practically no resources, Congressmen had shown an amazing capacity for improvisation. They had successfully tackled havoc caused by famine, flood and earthquake, and erected at their annual sessions, overnight as it were, cities of bamboo, straw and canvas. Now they had the entire machinery of the Union Government at their disposal but in the face of the refugee problem they felt helpless. Surrounded by red-tape, cut off from the power of the people, they met, deliberated and planned endlessly, lost in the cavernous mazes of the cumbersome machine which they had inherited, while thousands upon thousands of refugees, herded together in camps, and hating to live on charity, asked only for facilities to settle down. "Give us tools and we shall do the job," they clamoured, but got none.[27]

"The public is showing a critical tendency towards the Congress," observed Gandhiji in *Harijan*. "There must be some good reason for their doing so, and this change in their attitude should not be ignored. The Congress, which is in power, is not able, owing to defects in the present procedure, to give to the public what as a matter of fact is really available in the country and the public is displeased and interested parties are taking advantage of this situation to make the Congress unpopular. It is only the Congress which can maintain peace in the country and if it once loses its hold over the public, which may happen if the situation does not show signs of improvement and is allowed to deteriorate from day to day as it is doing, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for it to avoid the storm that may come."[28]

The Congress on its part was passing through the pangs of slow death as a national organisation and its rebirth as a party machine. "Between two worlds one dead, the other powerless to be born" the masses suffered and their sufferings grew. Giving expression to the feeling of frustration in the people's mind on the first Independence Day celebration after independence, viz. 26th January, 1948, Gandhiji in

the course of a written address observed: "What are we celebrating today? Surely not our disillusionment. We are entitled to celebrate the hope that the worst is over and that we are on the road to showing the lowliest of the villager that it means his freedom from serfdom and that he is no longer a serf born to serve the cities and towns of India but that he is destined to exploit the city-dwellers for the advertisement of the finished fruits of well-thought out labours, that he is the salt of the Indian earth, that it means also equality of all classes and creeds, never the domination and superiority of the major community over a minor, however insignificant it may be in number or influence. Let us not defer the hope and make the heart sick."[29]

The last days of Gandhiji were occupied with forging weapons that would enable him to cope with this growing welter of confusion. His plan of action was, it seems, in three parts: The first part related to the popular front, the other to the political front, and the third to the fundamental aspect of non-violence. The non-violence of the weak can work to a certain extent in the hands of the weak. It had so worked in the case of India. But when it becomes "a cloak for our weakness, it emasculates us."[30] Of late he had begun to say that the non-violence of the weak is a misnomer, i.e. "no non-violence at all". It had to be converted into non-violence of the brave, that is to say, true non-violence. The first part of his plan accordingly resolved itself into an effort to reorganise the constructive workers and constructive work organisations on a new basis in order to create a non-violent sanction that would enable the Congress effectively to complete the social revolution for which the political independence of India had cleared the way. The second took the form of giving a new orientation to Congress activities and devising for the Congress a new constitution that would enable it to retain its character as the people's organisation and to guide the politics of the country instead of being reduced to the status of a mere party machine in the hands of the ruling group. The third consisted in creating an incentive for the cultivation of the non-violence of the brave as a pre-condition of setting democracy on the march. The battle for decontrol became the vehicle for this last.

2

Controls were a vicious legacy of the war. Ever since March, 1947, when he returned to Delhi for the first time after leaving for Noakhali in October, 1946, Gandhiji had been off and on pleading with the Congress leaders in the Government for the abolition of controls. Controls were perhaps necessary during the war because the British Government

needed to divert large quantities of food-stuffs and other essential supplies, which could be ill spared from the country's requirements, to meet the needs of war. This unnatural diversion, coupled with interference with the country's economy, to stimulate production of strategic supplies, had created an artificial scarcity in respect of essential requirements. War-time inflation and extravagance accentuated the crisis. Prices spiralled up and rationing became inevitable in spite of its many and obvious drawbacks.

But as experience has everywhere shown, such controls once they come remain to stay, and so they continued even after the war. In the year 1947-48, the monsoon had not failed and there was no *real* scarcity of food. But owing to artificial control of prices, the growers and distributors of food-stuffs refused to part with their stocks at prices lower than what they could obtain in the open market.

The production figures registered a decline. The statisticians poring over the columns of dwindling figures felt uneasy in their easy-chairs and gave the red signal. The authorities reduced the ration of cereals from 16 oz. to 12 oz. Panic accentuated hoarding. The production figures sank still lower and this was taken as an argument for further cut in the ration. The vicious circle was set going. Artificial scarcity was well on the way to become a real scarcity. The growers produced less, stocks went into hiding, "ghost" ration cards multiplied, the black market flourished, and the machinery of control instead of providing a check itself became a gigantic racket. Standards of public morality declined, falsehood, fraud, petty oppression and graft became a national problem. Even the poor housewife could not escape the demoralising impact of corrupt practices to which she had hitherto been a stranger.

"The method of rationing of food and clothing is highly injurious for the country," Gandhiji wrote in *Harijan*. " . . . It is my firm belief that even today there is enough food-stuff in the country. Only the villagers have felt compelled to conceal the cereals and pulses under the insufferable control."[31]

To meet the cry for cheap bread, particularly for the non-producing industrial population and town-dwellers and the requirements of "deficit areas", the authorities had set up internally a procurement system by which they could draw food supplies from areas where there might be a surplus at the time. The gap was to be filled up by importing food from abroad and by squeezing the supplies from the unrationed areas. Gandhiji would have rather that deficit areas appeared deficit and the gap were covered by a nation-wide austerity campaign than that they should lull themselves into an easy-going self-complacency by converting the whole country artificially into a deficit area and covering up the dismal fact by begging food from abroad. But for the accumulated war-time surplus of sterling balances, which was being depleted on the average annually to the tune of rupees one hundred

crores to a hundred and twenty-five crores between years 1947-50 on the import of food alone, this policy might have spelt a complete collapse of the country's economy at home and financial credit abroad.

In the place of controls, Government could have run their own stores for selling at regulation price food grains which they could have bought in the open market, or in the last extremity, from an outside source. This was later suggested to the President of the Indian Republic by the American Ambassador in India, Chester Bowles, who had himself been in charge of the price control administration in the United States during the early days of the Second World War. It would have broken the vicious circle and brought about automatic regulation of prices. This, however, was not done.

The problem of cloth was even simpler. The hoarder, the black-marketer, or the profiteer would have no chance to fleece the public, Gandhiji pleaded, if the Government utilised the full potential of hand-spinning and hand-weaving. It had demonstrated its efficacy during the fight against the British. Foreign rulers had regarded Khadi with hostility. One could understand that. But the popular Government could have no such reason. To his utter amazement, however, he found that since they had come into power "nobody talked of Khadi; nobody seemed to have his faith in the possibility of Khadi. They could think of nothing but mill cloth for clothing India."[32]

Democracy was fast becoming a costly affair. It meant more Ministers, more popular representatives, more jobs, more appointments, more paraphernalia of the "prestige" of independence. In other words, it meant more and still more expenditure. The cost of administration mounted up. The cost of defence too was going up with the prospect of a race of armaments between India and Pakistan as a result of the division of the armed forces. The planners of the nation's destiny had their eyes on more revenue, additional sources of taxation. Big industry and big business alone could provide that and help build up an adequate military potential to make India a "great and powerful nation", modern and up-to-date—not the poor handicraftsman working in his cottage.

"I have repeatedly said," Gandhiji wrote in *Harijan*, casting aside his habitual reserve on the subject, "that I have neither part nor say in many things that are going on in the country today. It is no secret that Congress willingly said good-bye to non-violence when it accepted power. . . . The plain fact of the matter is that I am not the current coin that, I had fancied, I once was. Mine is a voice in the wilderness. . . . Khadi . . . has a kind of place if we tear it from its root which is Ahimsa. It no longer occupies the proud place of being the symbol *par excellence* of Ahimsa. Those who being in the political field support Khadi do so because it has attained that vogue. Today three cheers belong not to Khadi but to mill cloth. . . . Somehow or other the fear

has seized us that the millions will not take to hand-spinning and weaving hand-spun yarn for their own needs. A haunted man will detect fear even where there is no cause for it. And do we not know that many more die of fright than of the actual disease, the very name of which has given them the fright?"[33]

The concluding portion of Gandhiji's speech in the All-India Congress Committee, in November, 1947, referred to the question of controls. "Control . . . is responsible for much of the corruption that is rampant today. . . . If you do not abolish controls immediately, you will one day regret it. It makes people lazy and helpless."

The All-India Congress Committee, in a resolution, expressed alarm at the disturbance of normal life by the various controls, especially in regard to food-stuffs and clothing, and asked the Central and Provincial Governments to give urgent consideration to the problem of decontrol.

In the first week of November, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Minister for Food and Agriculture, called a meeting of the Provincial Premiers and their representatives to advise him on the question of food control. "Our Ministers are of the people, from the people," remarked Gandhiji in the course of a prayer address on the eve of the meeting. "Let them not arrogate to themselves greater knowledge than those experienced men who do not happen to occupy ministerial chairs—but who hold the view strongly that the sooner the control is removed the better. . . . Democracy will break under the strain of apron strings. It can exist only on trust. If the people die because they will not labour or because they will defraud one another, it will be a welcome deliverance. The rest will then learn not to repeat the sin of being lazy, idle or cruelly selfish."[34]

The Government were trying to spoon-feed the people, he warned. What the people needed was to be thrown on their own resources. "Experts of a sort," the Civil Service were "used to carrying on work from their offices. The red-tape and the files controlled their activity. They had never come in contact with the peasants. They did not know them."[35] They had to keep the foreign rule going somehow. And they were too few to handle successfully the work of reviving the drooping spirits of the millions.

> How I wish that the popular Ministers were humble enough to recognise the change that has come over the people. Their (the people's) initiative should not be strangled by the controls. They should be allowed to be self-reliant. Democracy should not result in making them helpless.[36]
>
> Control gives rise to fraud, suppression of truth, intensification of the black market and to artificial scarcity. Above all, it unmans the people and deprives them of initiative, it undoes the teaching

of self-help they have been learning for a generation. . . . This is a tragedy next only, if indeed not equal, to the fratricide . . . and the insane exchange of population resulting in . . . death, starvation and want of proper residence and clothing for the coming inclement weather. The second is certainly more spectacular. We dare not forget the first because it is not spectacular.[37]

Supposing the worst came to the worst, he pleaded, and the removal of controls made the situation worse, there was nothing to prevent them from reviving the controls. Personally, however, he had not a shadow of doubt that it would "greatly ease" the situation. And what was more, "people would begin to exert themselves to solve the problems and have little time to quarrel among themselves."[38]

The Union Ministers had fallen into the habit of relying on the advice tendered by their experts instead of listening to lay advice of those who were not in the administration. Gandhiji warned them: the figures put before them by their officers were not gospel truth. They were neither accurate nor full. Besides statistics could lie.

Must the voice of the people be drowned by the noise of the pundits, who claim to know all about the virtue of controls? Would that our Ministers who are drawn from the people and are of the people listened to the voice of the people rather than of the controllers of the red-tape, which they know did them infinite harm when they were in the wilderness! The pundits then ruled with a vengeance. Must they do even now?[39]

He asked the popular Ministers to get out of the jungle of statistics and files, and woo the public to help themselves with the greatest advantage to themselves and to the country.

Here was the challenge of a grave evil, which impinged on the life of every individual and threatened to rob independence of its content for which millions had fought, suffered and sacrificed. Had their non-violence of the last thirty years not been the non-violence of the weak, he told the people, they would not have experienced the helplessness that they were doing. They would have by non-violent organisation, easily put an end to black marketing, hoarding, profiteering, corruption, and so on.

The battle of decontrol became the second starting point of Gandhiji's endeavour to bring back the people to the non-violence of the brave and the Government to the non-violence of the people. If by dint of non-violent organisation they could get rid of the incubus that was weighing upon them, it might provide an all-powerful urge for the cultivation of that inner discipline, which is the core of the non-violence of the brave but for which he had not been able to devise a programme attractive enough (see page 327).

3

Following upon the recommendations of Dr. Rajendra Prasad's Committee, sugar was decontrolled early in December, 1947. The result was spectacular. The price of sugar came down immediately. The price of towels etc. also declined in sympathy, though the control on cloth had not yet been removed.

A few days after, the authorities decided to proceed with progressive decontrol of food grains. Referring to it Gandhiji explained that the object of decontrol was *not to lower price at a bound but to return to normal life*. "Decontrol means that the business of foresight is transferred from the few members of the Government to the millions comprising the nation."[40] The Government would have to bring home to the people methods of growing more food and to that end the agricultural department would have to learn how to serve "the hitherto neglected small grower as against the big capitalist producer."

He began to fill the columns of *Harijan* with instructions for turning "matter out of place" into compost and for growing vegetables in their backyards and kitchen gardens. Under his inspiration and guidance Mirabehn set about organising an all-India Compost Conference. As a result of its labours a compost department under the Ministry of Food and Agriculture was set up to give impetus to compost making and to educate the people in the same.

Price fixing under the procurement policy of the British Government had been manipulated to regulate the food prices in the interest of organised industry and the non-producing urban-population mainly. The farmer had been the sufferer. The small grower raised his crops largely for his own use. He reserved a small percentage for the general consumer. Control meant less payment to him for his surplus. It was therefore but to be expected that under decontrol he would demand and get a higher price for his produce. This would inevitably cause a rise in the prices of food. This, said Gandhiji, the consumer must not grudge. It was the duty of the Government to make this clear to the public from day to day and from week to week, and to see that in the new set up the whole of the percentage in the rise of prices went to the grower. The wealthy factory owners and middlemen should work in close cooperation with and in subordination to the Government. "There should be perfect coordination among those few men or corporations who have hitherto exploited the poor for their selfish purpose and have not hesitated to enter into unhealthy rivalry among themselves. This has to go specially in the case of food and cloth, where the profit motive has to be wholly absent."[41]

He next turned his attention to the decontrol of cloth and fire-

wood. Again the experts jibbed. Gandhiji argued with them: The people would not consume more firewood than necessary if the control was lifted. Removal of the control would not, therefore, adversely affect the poor in regard to firewood. About cloth, he had no fear whatever, unless Khadi which had been acclaimed as the "livery of our freedom" had completely gone into oblivion.

> We have cotton enough and capable hands enough to ply the Charkha and the loom in our villages. We can clothe ourselves comfortably and without fuss and without heavy transport facilities. Our railways in the dead regime were first a military necessity, then for transporting cotton bales to the ports of export and distribution of calico manufactures imported from foreign parts. All this centralisation becomes a superfluity when our hand-spun calico called Khadi is manufactured and mostly used in our villages. Let us not swear at our villagers to conceal our laziness or ignorance or both.[42]

Remained the petrol. Shortage of railway transport, he instinctively sensed, constituted the real bottle-neck. There was shortage of coal and wagons. Motor transport was the obvious answer. But control on petrol coupled with the monopoly system in licensing plying vehicles hampered road transport. A regular traffic in petrol permits had grown up under it. Simply by selling his petrol permits for one vehicle, the owner holding a licence for a single route could easily net ten thousand rupees a month. If there were no petrol rationing and no monopoly system, the income from plying one vehicle could not exceed three hundred rupees per month.

The upholders of petrol rationing objected: India's quota of petrol supply was poor; only one per cent. of the world's supply. Rationing of petrol was, therefore, necessary. "If our quota of petrol is poor," Gandhiji asked them, "how is it that the black market supply (of petrol) is inexhaustible and . . . unnecessary traffic goes on without hindrance?"[43] Petrol was not a thing which everybody needed. The Government could keep enough for their requirement. They could even buy in the "open black market".[44]

Quick road transport, he predicted, would immediately bring down the prices of articles of common consumption. There was for instance the poor man's salt. The salt tax had gone but the system of selective licensing had remained and salt had become even more expensive than before. The reason was partly transport difficulty and partly the selfish greed of a few contractors. There was a single remedy for both. Now that salt was free, people should shed their "laziness" and make their own salt, wherever it was possible as they had done during the Salt Satyagraha days. It opened up the glorious vista of galvanising

millions into a united constructive non-violent effort related to one of their basic needs.

Once again the instinct of the man of the masses proved a surer guide than the wisdom of experts. By the first week of January, 1948, the prices of sugar and allied products in the open market had dropped by 50 per cent.[45] The prices of woollen and silken cloth also had fallen by 50 per cent.; stocks came out of their hiding and the market was flooded with silks and woollens. Wholesale prices of cotton cloth and yarn began to slump in anticipation of decontrol. The fears of the statisticians were belied. They had failed to take into account the human factor. Gandhiji presented to them the moral: "*Timidity has no place in democracy.* When people in general believe in and want a particular thing, their representatives have but to give shape to their demand and make it feasible. *A favourable manly attitude of the multitude has been found to go a long way in winning battles.*"[46]

The battle of decontrol provided a striking demonstration of the native vigour of Gandhiji's method of direct approach to the people's problems and his technique of invoking their capacity for improvisation to solve them.

Telegrams and letters of congratulations began pouring in. Gandhiji declined to take credit for the achievement. The real credit belonged to the masses, he said. Businessmen had realised that he was merely voicing the opinion of the millions when he said that the controls should go. He was sure that if his voice had prevailed, "the unseemly communal trouble", too, would have long become a thing of the past. But in that regard he was dubbed a "visionary". He knew he was right there also. Could he be "consistently right and practical in so many things, including decontrol and unpractical in this matter of life and death for the nation?" he asked.[47]

Gandhiji once defined democracy as "the art and science of mobilising the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all."[48] What he was trying to do was to set democracy on the march. The campaign for decontrol marked the beginning of that effort. It called for faith in human nature and in the possibilities latent in the common man. It would be a negation of democracy, he said, if the Government did everything and the people did nothing, or if the Government prevented them from doing anything they wanted to do. A Government worth the name had to show to the nation "how to face the handicaps of life through its own collective effort instead of its being effortlessly helped to live anyhow."[49]

"The bogy of the shooting up of prices does not frighten me," he wrote in *Harijan*. "If we have many sharks and we do not know how to combat them, we shall deserve to be eaten up by them. Then we shall know how to carry ourselves in the teeth of adversity. Real demo-

cracy people learn not from books, nor from the Government who are in name and in reality their servants. Hard experience is the most efficient teacher in democracy."[50]

On the 30th January, 1948, he crossed the bar. Government failed to take subsidiary steps such as open market operations, which could have made the experiment of decontrol a success. Profiteering came back, prices again spiralled up. The authorities had never fully appreciated the full implications of decontrol. At the first sign of panic, they hurriedly reversed the experiment. The rise in prices in the short period, as a result of decontrol, was but to be expected. It could only be temporary. Prices could be depended upon to return to their normal level after the initial difficulties of adjustment were overcome and the system had had a long enough trial to have some effect on production. But the Government would not wait even till the next *kharif* harvest to come in December next. Controls were clamped down again in October, 1948.

The authorities were frightened of the spectre of the hoarder and the profiteer. They could not shoot them all. No democratic Government can. Gandhiji reminded them of what they had forgotten, viz. that the people's non-violent organisation can step in and take over where governmental machinery stops short or fails. He had already begun to put moral pressure upon the industrialists and businessmen to curb their short-sighted greed.

Addressing a gathering of Delhi businessmen in the Hardinge Library Hall on 28th December, he told them that the reason for the controls was the fear of dishonesty and profiteering. The businessmen wanted decontrol. He assumed it was not for profiteering but for the sake of the people. They were bound, therefore, to be cent per cent. honest. If the various associations of businessmen and millowners and the general public strengthened each others' hands for the removal of control, they would become the arm of the Government in a more real sense than the Civil Service. Real business did not consist in merely making money anyhow. Pointing to a placard in the hall which said that the prosperity of India lay in decontrol, he concluded that he could heartily endorse that motto because of his belief in the fundamental honesty of businessmen. He hoped they would not belie that faith.

His handling of businessmen was characteristic of his combination of naivete with astuteness, trust with circumspection. Many a party had before fallen for his cooperation when it seemed to suit their self-interest. But they found that it stuck in their throat when they tried to get away with it. The businessmen knew that if after securing their object they failed to keep their part of the bargain, he would not hesitate to invoke against them the sanction of Satyagraha. This could include peaceful picketing and boycott. He was sure, all sections

of the public would whole-heartedly respond. And since in the present case the non-violent action of the people would not be the result of a feeling of helplessness, as it partly was during the fight against the British, it would not be of the "passive resistance" variety but the non-violence of the brave.

4

Gandhiji was a born democrat. He was the greatest democrat of all times because he saw God in humanity and humanity in God. The one saved him from the dilemma which sometimes confronts humanists when Demos turns into Chaos; the other saved him from the fallacy of individualism which leads men to seek peace and personal salvation in the retirement of the cave.

There are two approaches to democracy. One involves the elimination of the weakest for "the good of the greatest number", as is done in the Western democracies today. This is the violent approach. The other is the non-violent approach based on the principle of "unto this last". Gandhiji described Western democracy as it functions today, as "diluted Nazism or Fascism. At best . . . merely a cloak to hide the Nazi and the Fascist tendencies of imperialism."[51] Under it "the weakest . . . go to the wall." Gandhiji regarded this as an insult to man and God, a travesty of true democracy. "No country in the world today shows any but patronising regard for the weak . . . . My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest."[52] "The rule of the people by the people for the people" means the rule of "unadulterated Ahimsa" for the simple reason that the natural corollary to the use of violent means would be "to remove all opposition through the suppression and extermination of the antagonists. That does not make for individual freedom."[53]

The independence he envisaged was an independence in which freedom and fruits of freedom would be enjoyed by the lowliest in an equal measure with the tallest. For this the means for its attainment had to be such that the weakest could take an equal share in the winning of it with the strongest. This is possible only under non-violence.

It was because India was trying to evolve true democracy, explained Gandhiji to an American friend, that she had adopted "Satyagraha expressed through Charkha, the village industries . . . prohibition and non-violent organisation of labour etc." as her weapons. "These mean mass effort and mass education." He called it "the permanent part of the non-violent effort. From this effort is created the capacity to offer non-violent resistance called non-cooperation and civil disobedience."[54]

To knit together in a common bond of fellowship the millions and

weave the pattern of non-violence into the basic activities of their lives, Gandhiji had devised his eighteen-fold constructive programme —a programme of humanitarian service of the common man—and set up a number of organisations to work it out. Such activity, when consciously practised, provides a basis for non-violent organisation and discipline to the people, resting not upon force but its opposite. He gave it the name "constructive non-violence".

There is nothing rigid or inviolable in the form of the various constructive activities. They can be changed, added to, or subtracted from at will and replaced by other equivalent forms according to the varying needs, temperaments and traditions and the social, economic and religious background of the people concerned.[55] The only thing that is essential is that they should be "fundamentally non-violent" and provide an answer to some keenly felt need or recognised evil of the time. They must be elemental in their simplicity and universal in their scope so as to embrace the largest number of people in their fold — particularly the masses.

"Constructive work," in the words of Gandhiji, "is for a non-violent army what drilling etc. is for an army designed for bloody warfare."[56] Experience showed, he said, that for the attainment of limited or local objectives, it was possible for individuals or small groups to launch successful non-violent action even without this preparation. But for its successful application in vital issues involving large masses of people, training in constructive work was an absolute necessity. "Trust begotten in the pursuit of continuous constructive work becomes a tremendous asset at the critical moment. . . . Individual civil disobedience among an unprepared people and by leaders not known to or trusted by them is of no avail; and mass civil disobedience is an impossibility."[57]

Ever since their inception, the various constructive work organisations had sought consistently to cooperate with the Congress. The Congress, on its part, had welcomed their cooperation chiefly for its political value in the fight against the British. Had they any role to play after the attainment of independence? Gandhiji had not a shadow of a doubt, as he had so often reiterated, that constructive work would be as necessary for sustaining independence as it had been for attaining it. While the non-violent struggle was on, he had written a small brochure on the theory and practice of constructive programme as an instrument for the attainment of freedom. After independence, when his publishers wanted to bring out a new edition of it, he told them that for a new edition it would have to be recast, perhaps rewritten, and its argument recast to show how constructive programme could be used to realise the full content of independence in terms of the masses. But before he could do so he was carried away.

The Indian National Congress had for its goal the winning of

India's independence. That object had been achieved. To redefine its objective in the altered circumstances, and to draw up an economic programme for the Congress under independence, the All-India Congress Committee, in its meeting in November, 1947, had appointed an Objectives and Economic Programme Committee.

Some members of the Objectives and Economic Programme Committee, with the representatives of the various constructive work organisations, had a series of talks with Gandhiji in the first half of December, 1947. The gathering included seasoned soldiers of many a non-violent struggle. Some of them had been with Gandhiji from the very beginning of his political career in India. This was the last meeting that he was to have with them.

Hitherto non-violence had been used to offer resistance to the alien Government. The problem now was how to run the Government non-violently. Non-violence could have no future as world power unless it could be shown to be capable of retaining and defending the independence which it had helped India to win; in other words, unless it could successfully act upon and influence power politics. The question was whether it could be so used, and if so how?

There was a strong feeling among an important section of constructive workers that while the Congress had sworn adherence to constructive programme and a decentralised system of rural economy based on handicrafts and cottage industries for years when it was engaged in the struggle for freedom, since coming into power it showed signs of giving it the go-bye. What use was their striving to popularise the use of village products like brown sugar, hand-pounded rice etc., they asked, when their Government was sanctioning the erection of sugar and rice mills and was giving protection to sugar industry? Congress leaders continued to talk of expanding Khadi production but the Provincial Governments were increasing cloth mills (see page 25). Now that they had their own Government, was not the right course for those who had faith in constructive programme to form themselves into a separate organisation, get into the Government and use it for the furtherance of their goal, viz. the building up of a non-violent social order? They would thus accomplish in five years what as a non-official, reformist group outside the Government they would not be able to achieve in fifty.

Gandhiji differed. The moment non-violence assumed power, it contradicted itself and became contaminated. In 1937, he had sent some members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh, an organisation of out and out believers in non-violence, into the legislatures to purify politics, to purge it of violence and corruption. "The Sangh made a short-lived attempt under my guidance to enter into and purify the politics of the country, but I had to admit defeat and ultimately the Sangh itself had to be wound up." Their purpose, he told the workers, would be served

if they set their own house in order and attained the standard that was expected of them. They would then guide power and mould the politics of the country without taking power themselves.

Why did they lack the power to make the Government go the whole-hog with them? The fault lay with the constructive workers. They had faith in constructive work but their faith was not deep or enlightened enough to illumine their intellect and so their growth had been lop-sided. "The criticism levelled against constructive workers is that they are wooden-minded, lacking in imagination and intellect. Reason, as a rule, follows sentiment. Our intelligentsia are not lacking in sympathy for constructive work. But we have not sufficiently penetrated their hearts to carry their reason with us. Such is our bankruptcy."

He then went on to give his analysis of the reasons for the failure. The Congress had adopted constructive work for its political value. "The fight over, our interest in constructive work waned. Constructive work is not a strategy or a technique of fighting to be adopted or discarded as expediency may suggest. It connotes a way of life. It has to be adopted by the heart as well as by the intellect." It was no use cavelling at the Congress. The Congress had lent the various constructive work organisations its name, it had given them the charter to function, but the constructive workers had failed to come up to the scratch. "*The goal of constructive work is not to provide economic relief to the unemployed or to distribute some wages to the poor but to build up a non-violent social order.* In that we have not made much headway." What they needed for that was "*a superior, a more advanced type of worker who would have a full understanding of the scientific basis of constructive work and an awareness of its implications in terms of non-violence.* Success would depend on uttermost purity; impatience would be fatal."

For the time being, most of their workers were drawn from the cities. But thereafter, they would, he told them, need more and more "a cadre of workers drawn from the villages themselves who can get under the skin of the villagers and instinctively think in terms of their thought."

As preparatory to the discharge of their new role, he suggested that there should be integration of the various constructive work organisations and co-ordination of their activities. If the various organisations could unite and work together without a jar or jolt under jointly chosen representatives, it would be a big step forward. On the other hand, if they could not express non-violence in their mutual relationships and work harmoniously among themselves, they would not be able to produce any effect on their environment.

The various associations had hitherto functioned separately and independently of one another. Their coming together would ensure economy of organisation. For instance, why should there be separate

stores and sales depots for the Spinners' Association and the Village Industries Association? Why could not the machinery of the Spinners' Association be available for furthering the activities of both? Then there was the question of the education of the constructive workers' children. Why should not the Talimi Sangh take it up? Was not that the function of the Talimi Sangh? "If we will not cooperate even in such matters, it will show that we have not understood how truth and Ahimsa work."

He put the burden of the transformation upon the shoulders of the Talimi Sangh. Its was essentially the universal educator's role. As he saw it, the whole problem facing the country resolved itself into one of "adult education". There was the challenge of communalism which threatened the very basis of what they had stood for and fought for all these years, i.e. the ideal of the secular State. "To correct the wrong psychology of the people in this regard is essentially a problem in adult education and therefore the function of the Talimi Sangh." It was for the Talimi Sangh to qualify itself for that role. As a first step in that direction, he suggested that each and every member of the Sangh should achieve utmost self-purification. A letter he wrote to a prominent member of the Talimi Sangh a few days later will serve as an illustration: "Years ago X told me that you were not wholly truthful. . . . He also said that you were not free from arrogance. Where there is arrogance, there can be no Ahimsa. . . . If what I have been told is true, the great work you are shouldering will not flourish, or else it will belie its name. Do not take it too much to heart. If there is truth in it, make a candid admission and turn the occasion into a stepping stone for progress." Characteristically the letter concluded: "I have described the present phase of our national effort as a vast all-embracing experiment in adult education which embraces us all—including myself. For am I not the chief protagonist and progenitor of the whole idea of basic education?"

In course of discussion Dr. Zakir Husain remarked: "If an overall organisation of the various associations comes into being, it will not be possible for it to keep out of power politics."

Gandhiji: "I do not want the united constructive workers' organisation in any sense to develop into a rival to the Congress or to the Government. If the united constructive workers' organisation tries to go into power politics, it will be its ruin. . . . By abjuring power and devoting ourselves to pure, selfless service of the voters, we can guide and influence them. It will give us far more real power than we shall have by going into the Government. A stage may come when the people themselves may say that they want us and no-one else in power. The question can then be considered. I shall most probably be not alive then. But when that time comes, the organisation will throw up from amongst its own ranks someone who will take over the

reins of administration. *By that time India shall have become an ideal State.*"

Dr. Zakir Husain: "Shall we not need ideal men in order to inaugurate the ideal State?"

Gandhiji: "We can send men of our choice without going into the Government ourselves. Today everybody in the Congress is running after power. Let us not be in the same cry as the power-seekers . . . but keep altogether aloof from power politics and its contagion. The objective of the constructive work organisations is to generate political power, not to capture it. But if we say that political power being attained, it should be ours as a reward for our labour, it would degrade us.

"Take the Spinners' Association. It has the largest membership of all the constructive work organisations. Yet I have never tried to get its members enrolled on the Congress register. It was suggested to me once but I opposed it. Do we want to capture the Congress? I asked. That would be tantamount to committing suicide. The Congress can be ours only by right of service. What actually happened was that at the time of the general elections, the people from the villages came and sought our advice as to whom they should vote for, because they knew that we were there as their true servants and had no axe to grind. Today we have our own Government. Under adult suffrage, if we are worth our salt, we should have such hold upon the people that whoever was chosen by us should be returned. Politics have today become corrupt. Anybody who goes into them is contaminated. Let us keep out of them altogether. Our influence will grow thereby. The greater our inner purity, the greater shall be our hold on the people, without any effort on our part.

"You have met here as the constructive wing of the Congress. If you have assimilated what I have told you, it should give you the strength to remove corruption everywhere. For that you do not need to go into any position of power in the Congress organisation. Your work is among the masses. You have to resuscitate the village, make it prosperous, give it more education, more power."

The workers put forth their difficulty. The Constituent Assembly was hammering out a constitution for the Indian Union. Congressmen had always said that the village Panchayat must be the foundation of their future polity. But in the constitution that was being framed, there was no mention of village Panchayats. What good would it be if the village did not find its due place in it? Should constructive workers allow this to happen?

Gandhiji: "I am well aware of it. We must recognise the fact that the constitution we want or the social order of our dreams cannot come through the Congress of today. Nor need that worry you. Nobody knows what shape the constitution will ultimately take. Therefore, I say, leave constitution-making to those who are labouring at

it. Do not bother about effecting changes in it. It should be enough for us if the constitution we get does not actually stand in the way of constructive work. Constitution-making in any case would be over in a few months. What next? The responsibility for working it and making a success of it will rest on you. Supposing you get a constitution after your heart, but it does not work. After five years, someone will say, 'You had your innings, now give us a chance.' You will have to give in and they may try to seize power, set up a dictatorship and strangulate the Congress. On the other hand, suppose you do not take power but obtain a hold on the people. You will then be able to return at the polls whomsoever you may wish. Forget membership of the Government therefore so long as the voters are in your hand. Take care of the root. Make purity the sole test. Even a handful imbued with this spirit will be able to transform the atmosphere. The people will soon perceive the difference and will not be slow to react. Yours is an uphill and difficult task. But it is full of rich promise."

Workers: "The people are with us, but the Government obstructs our effort. What are we to do?"

Gandhiji: "If the people are with you, the Government is bound to respond. If it does not, it will be set aside and another installed in its place."

Workers: "But why cannot we get the Congress to do it?"

Gandhiji: "Because the Congressmen are not sufficiently interested in constructive work. If they were, it should not have been necessary for us to meet here today."

Workers: "That being the Congress mentality, what is the use of giving place to constructive work organisations in the Congress constitution?"

Gandhiji: "Because the constitution moulds the psychology of the people. We may not after all be able to get Congressmen to do the things they profess to believe in. But it should be our duty to see that the case does not go by default owing to our neglect or laziness."

Workers: "Labour is represented in the Legislative Assemblies. There are special seats reserved for the universities. Why should not the constructive workers similarly have functional representatives in the All-India Congress Committee, who would *then of course* act in the general way too?"

Gandhiji: "No, not the mixture. Functional is all right but in the general there is so much corruption today that it frightens me. Everybody wants to carry so many votes in his pocket, because votes give power. Under adult suffrage anybody who is eligible has a vote. But to regard adult suffrage as a means for capturing political power would be to put the constitution to a corrupt use. My suggestion to you, therefore, is that the various constructive work organisations should form themselves into one body and the Working Committee and the

All-India Congress Committee should ask it to send its nominees to advise and guide them in matters of policy pertaining to constructive work. The Congress has lent us its name and prestige. In return, it derives strength and prestige from us by virtue of the service which we, as its true servants, render to the people. The relationship of the constructive work organisations with the Congress is purely moral. It can be severed at any moment. As specialists, it is for us to tender to the Congress advice on what needs to be done. There are the Ahmedabad Labour Union, the Spinners' Association, the Go-Seva Sangh, the Village Industries Association, the Talimi Sangh, the Chambers of Commerce and so on. The Congress claims to represent them all, although all of them are not organisationally related to it. Take all the living organisations with you. Purify yourselves of all dross, banish the very idea of capture of power and you will be able to guide power and keep it on the right path. Therein lies the salvation of the masses. There is no other way."

5

"Can love be organised?" a Chinese visitor once asked Gandhiji. "Organisation in the orthodox sense may not be possible," replied Gandhiji. "But there is no bar to united non-violent action. . . . It has its own technique."[58]

Gandhiji had always said that "complete non-violence needs neither the aid of speech nor the pen. . . . It certainly does not stand in need of organised strength. A man or a woman who is saturated with Ahimsa has only to will a thing and it happens."[59]

This led some people—and they included some of Gandhiji's closest associates—to ask whether organisation could have any place in non-violence; whether the two were not incompatible. They thought that they were. Gandhiji held otherwise. He regarded *organisation as the test* of true Ahimsa. While he could picture to himself what he had envisaged about complete non-violence, he said, his own experience of it was so meagre that he could not ask others to build upon it. Non-violence to him meant not merely a spiritual beatitude—a means for individual salvation—but an instrument of action which the people at large could use for the redress of social no less than individual wrongs. Organisation implies the capacity to back decisions by an effective sanction. Non-violence that could not forge an effective sanction to enforce the social will for the vindication of truth and justice, therefore, had very little value in his eyes. Hence his search for the secret of non-violent organisation.

The principles of non-violent organisation differ in several respects from those of organisation of violence. As Gandhiji put it: "The

way of organising the forces of good must be opposite to that of the evil way." What precisely it was, he said, he did not yet fully know. He was still experimenting when he was taken away. Some of these principles can, however, be studied *in vivo* in the character, constitution and working of Gandhiji's various constructive work organisations. They all presented some anamolous characteristics or paradoxes in common.

For instance, they all bore the imprimature and sanction of the Congress but they functioned independently of the Congress. The Congress had no jurisdiction or control over them. This provided a solution to the ticklish problem of cooperation between groups and organisations holding different or dissimilar ideals, without compromising their respective ideals, that has always been the bugbear of idealists. The Congress was not a homogeneous organisation. It had adopted non-violence only as a policy which it was free to change at will. The constructive work organisations, on the other hand, were conceived by Gandhiji as the means for the generation of unadulterated non-violence. In the present case, so long as the Congress adhered to the policy of unadulterated non-violence, the activities of the various constructive work organisations would give it strength. But the constructive work organisations would remain unaffected by the heterogeneous character of the Congress, or by a change in Congress policy.

The second peculiarity of these organisations was that though they had all a definite political objective, their activities were strictly non-political. By scrupulously keeping politics out of their activities and concentrating solely on the means, viz. non-violent organisation of the people, they were able to achieve striking political results.

Finally, while these organisations were instruments for building democracy, they were not democracies in the sense that their executives were not elected by the popular vote or by the vote of the members. A reformer or a pioneer cannot afford to be democratic in the sense of following majority decisions. His function is to lead, to educate. "If you will be soldiers in my army," said Gandhiji to his workers, "understand that there is no room for democracy in that organisation. The army may be a part of a democratic organisation, but there can be no democracy in it, as there can be none in a bank, as there is none in our various organisations—All-India Spinners' Association, All-India Village Industries Association, and so on. In an army the General's word is law, and his conditions cannot be relaxed."[60]

The Harijan Sevak Sangh presented still another paradox. Though founded with the object of the eradication of untouchability, root and branch, and the amelioration of Harijans, its executive was drawn solely from the ranks of the "caste" Hindus. Harijans had no place on it. This puzzled many people at the time. But Gandhiji was firm on this point. The function of the Harijan Sevak Sangh was not to claim

a privilege or confer a favour but to discharge a debt. He had conceived it as "a society of penitents". Since the sinners in the present case were "caste" Hindus, it was they who must show penitence by expiatory service of the Harijans and education of "caste" Hindu opinion to purge Hinduism of the taint of untouchability. Untouchability could not be eradicated unless the wrong-doers showed genuine repentance and repentance cannot be done by proxy.

The same paradoxical characteristics were reflected in their method of transacting business, too. Their decisions were not taken by majority vote, but by "the general associative principle of the large family system" as obtains in a Panchayat. The articles of association were binding upon all the organisations but the sole sanction behind their decisions was the moral authority of the leader.

Gandhiji combined in his person the roles of both a democrat and a reformer. Often the two alternated. When the democrat in him was called to the fore, he allowed himself to be led by majority decisions. When on the other hand, he had to play the role of a reformer or a pioneer, he functioned through his Ashram or through an *ad hoc* body like a Satyagraha Committee, where the majority rule did not apply. Sometimes the two roles overlapped. He then functioned purely in his individual capacity. Outstanding instances of this were when he declared a "one-man rebellion" against constituted authority for the vindication of the people's self-respect, or in obedience to his "inner voice" launched on a fast to protest against social or governmental injustice.

The Congress had a double function. It was a democratic organisation in peace time. It became a non-violent army in "war" time. In its second capacity it had no voting power. Its will was expressed by its General "whoever he may be". Every unit had to tender him willing obedience in thought, word, and deed. "Yes, even in thought, since the fight is non-violent."[61]

In a national emergency, when Gandhiji was called upon to lead the people in a Satyagraha fight, he got himself voted as a "dictator" with full powers; or as the nation's sole representative, when he was called upon to conduct delicate negotiations on the nation's behalf, as at the time of the second Indian Round Table Conference. But since his power as a "dictator" rested solely on his moral authority, his "dictatorship" was not incompatible with the purest democracy.

In the case of the constructive work organisations, the apparent contradiction between the form of their constitution and their objective was removed by Gandhiji's insistence that while they could have their own funds, the funds should be spent up in the implementation of their programmes and not hoarded to enable them to live upon an assured fixed income. This would force them to vindicate their existence by the service they rendered. If they failed to discharge their

trust properly or to win or retain public confidence, public support would dry up and they would have either to close down or to reform; they would never stagnate. This helped to preserve their truly democratic character in spite of their "undemocratic" constitution.

Some of these characteristics were seen in action in the course of the discussion on the integration of the various constructive work organisations. The heads of some of the organisations, it was well known, had some mental reservations in regard to integration. It was suggested by a co-worker, whose thinking obviously was in terms of power politics, that the question should first be referred to the rank and file of the various organisations. They would then place their decisions before the heads. A gathering of office-bearers would not have "the requisite atmosphere"; theirs would be a "narrow and subjective approach". Gandhiji smelt danger in this. It savoured of a manoeuvre to force the hands of the senior members by the majority vote of the rank and file. He at once put his foot down on it. "This is not how a non-violent democracy functions," he told them. "The average worker will not even understand. He will feel at sea in such a discussion. Let the props and pillars unite first. All will then feel the glow of strength."

Ultimately it was decided that the question of integration should be taken up in another meeting in an atmosphere of tranquillity, away from the political heat and turmoil of the capital, preferably at Sevagram.

Gandhiji to Kishorlal Mashruwala 29th, January 1948

> I have mooted to the friends here the idea of my staying at Sevagram from the 3rd to 12th February. The purpose of my visit will be the unification of the various constructive work organisations.

This, however, could not be.

6

Jung has described present-day democracy as a "chronic state of mitigated civil war". Our war-like instincts are ineradicable. Psychologically speaking, democracy is a device, which by enabling the conflict to be carried on within its own national frame, "introverts war". In democracy, "our warlike instincts spend themselves in the form of domestic quarrels called 'political life'. We fight each other within the limits of law and constitution."[62] The people in a democracy are averse to being involved in external conflicts because they want to be free to carry on their internal quarrel undisturbed. This accounts for

their "outward peaceful manner" but it does not eliminate strife from our midst. "We are far from being at peace with ourselves: on the contrary, we hate and fight each other, because we have succeeded in introverting war."[63] This is in itself a big advance. But we are far from the goal yet. "We still have enemies in the flesh, and we have not yet managed to introvert our political disharmonies into our personal selves. . . . Even our national mitigated state of war would come to end if everybody could see his own shadow and begin the only struggle which is really worth while, the fight against the overwhelming power-drive of our own shadow. . . . Our order would be perfect if people could only take their lust of combat home into themselves."[64]

This needs some further explanation. Within our being there is a perpetual conflict going on between our higher and primitive instincts. But the sustained, strenuous effort needed to subdue the brute in us is in itself unpleasant. So, quite unawares, we choose the line of least resistance and seek an escape from our predicament by banishing the unpleasant fact from our conscious. This leaves us with our pent up antipathy, which unable to discharge itself in struggle, fixes itself upon some object outside us in which that particular trait is reflected so that this object in its turn becomes our *bete noire*. The struggle, thus, instead of being directed against the evil is diverted to its shadow. "Anything which disappears from your psychological inventory," Jung tells us, "is apt to turn up in the disguise of a hostile neighbour, where it will inevitably arouse your anger and make you aggressive. It is certainly better to know that your worst adversary is right in your own heart."[65]

When things around us go wrong, said Gandhiji, the cause for it must be looked for within ourselves. We are the cause and makers of our surroundings. The outer is only a projection of the inner. As we are, so our universe becomes. To set right our environment, we must turn the searchlight inward and direct our crusading zeal against our own shortcomings. We shall then hate none, find fault with none, nor try to lord it over anybody, but feel at peace with the whole world.

Thus regarded, the problem of democracy resolves itself into the problem of achieving conquest over self. In his *Indian Home Rule* Gandhiji accordingly defined Swaraj or self-rule as "rule over self". "The root meaning of Swaraj is self-rule" or "disciplined rule from within".[66] "The outward freedom . . . that we shall attain, will only be in exact proportion to the inward freedom to which we may have grown at a given moment."[67]

Political self-government being self-government for a large number of men and women can be, he held, no better than individual self-government, and it is therefore "to be attained by precisely the same means that are required for individual self-government or self-rule."[68] He described himself as a "philosophical anarchist". Political power with him was not an end in itself but, "one of the means" for bettering

the condition of the people. "Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation is necessary."[69]

Gandhiji rejected the view that the State is the "natural, necessary and final form of human organisation" (Hegel), in which all individual moralities and freedoms are merged and transcended and outside of which there can be neither any morality nor any freedom nor any social good; or that "in using force . . . the State is furthering the freedom of citizens as a whole" (Green). On the contrary he regarded "freedom to err and the duty of correcting errors"[70] as the soul of Swaraj or independence, and freedom of choice as the necessary precondition of moral action. "So long as we act like machines there can be no question of morality. If we want to call an action moral, it should have been done consciously and as a matter of duty. . . . No action can be called moral, unless it is prompted by a moral intention."[71] "To make mistakes as a freeman," is therefore "better than being in bondage in order to avoid them" for the simple reason that "the mind of a man who remains good under compulsion cannot improve, in fact it worsens. And when compulsion is removed, all the defects well up to the surface with even greater force."[72]

An ideal State thus, according to Gandhiji, would be "an ordered anarchy" or a "state of enlightened anarchy". "In such a State everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbours. In the ideal State therefore there is no political power because there is no State."[73]

In practice this ideal, however, "is never fully realised".[74] Gandhiji admits that "nowhere in the world does a State without Government exist."[75] But that need not worry anybody. "Euclid's line is one without breadth but no-one has so far been able to draw it and never will. All the same it is only by keeping the ideal line in mind that we have made progress in geometry."[76] What is true of Euclid's line is true of every ideal. "I believe that a State can be administered on a non-violent basis if the vast majority of the people are non-violent."[77] "If we continue to work for such a society, it will slowly come into being to an extent such that the people can benefit by it."[78] It was Gandhiji's firm faith that if there was one country in the world where such a society could come into being, it was India. For "ours is the only country where the attempt has, at any rate, been made."[79]

Since, however, for all practical purposes some sort of Government there must be and since no Government worth its name can suffer anarchy to prevail, Gandhiji set forth as the ideal to be aimed at "a predominantly non-violent Government" or a Government "that governs least" as the nearest approach to a self-regulated Stateless society. "A Government cannot succeed in becoming entirely non-

violent, because it represents all the people. I do not today conceive of such a golden age. But I do believe in the possibility of a predominantly non-violent society. A Government representing such society will use the least amount of force."[80]

Gandhiji deliberately refused to define in advance the nature of Government in a society based on non-violence. All he could say was that "when society is deliberately constructed in accordance with the law of non-violence, its structure will be different in material particulars from what it is today."[81] Nor did he consider this to be necessary for the building of a non-violent State. He attached greater importance to the means. The final goal would be determined "not by our definitions but by our acts."[82] If they took care of the means, the ends would take care of themselves. Wherever the method of force had been used, the logic of the means had overruled the will and conscious purpose of those who employed them and dictated a course altogether different from what they had envisaged. In the result, the State instead of withering away, became more absolute, more ruthless, more authoritarian and all-embracing than any that had been known before. If the people were lacking in non-violence and self-restraint, exploitation and violence would continue in spite of democratic constitution. On the other hand, if they adopted a non-violent way of life, the non-violent State would emerge as the natural by-product of their practice of non-violence.

Can non-violence be used in politics? Gandhiji was once asked.

"It can be used in politics," he answered, "precisely as it can be used in the domestic sphere. We may not be perfect in our use of it but we definitely discard the use of violence, and grow from failure to success."[83]

"Do you think it is a realisable ideal?" he was again asked.

"Yes," he replied. "It is realisable to the extent non-violence is realisable."

"You would govern non-violently but all legislation is violence," the questioner persisted.

Gandhiji answered: "No, not all legislation. *Legislation imposed by the people upon themselves is non-violence to the extent it is possible in society.* A society organised and run on the basis of complete non-violence would be purest anarchy. . . . The nearest approach to purest anarchy would be a democracy based on non-violence. The European democracies are to my mind a negation of democracy." (Italics mine).

"Do you think that non-violence or the democracy that you visualise was ever realised in the olden times?"

"I do not know. But . . . I have no doubt in my mind that at some stage we were wiser, and that we have to grow wiser than we are today in order to find what beauties are hidden in human nature."

Some time after this, B. G. Kher, the ex-Chief Minister of Bombay,

with a party of co-workers came to Gandhiji. Considerable communal rioting had broken out in some parts of the Bombay Province and the Government had been forced to resort to firing at a number of places. All the members of the group were firm believers in non-violence. But they could not see how the firing could have been avoided. Gandhiji had been asking the Congress Ministers to carry on the administration non-violently. They asked him: Supposing he were in charge of the Government in independent India, how would he run the administration non-violently? In reply Gandhiji explained that in the case in issue, the question of administering non-violently could arise in a practical shape only if independence was won by non-violent means, in other words when the bulk of the country had been organised non-violently. The believers in non-violence would then be in the majority. It should not be difficult in that event to carry on administration without the help of the police and the military because the anti-social element would already have come under their control. "If, for instance, in Sevagram we have five or seven goondas in a population of seven hundred who are non-violently organised, the five or seven will either live under the discipline of the rest or leave the village. But you will see," he continued, "that I am answering the question with the utmost caution, and my truth makes me admit that we might have to maintain a police force."[84]

In the following week he further developed the idea of administering non-violently in an article in *Harijan*. Whilst he did envisage a State, he observed, where the police would not be necessary, in practice he was prepared to concede that even in a non-violent State a police force might be necessary. "This, I admit, is a sign of my imperfect Ahimsa. I have not the courage to declare that we can carry on without a police force as I have in respect of an army."[85] But this police force would be of a "wholly different pattern from the present-day police force. Its ranks will be composed of believers in non-violence. They will be servants, not masters, of the people. The people will instinctively render them every help, and through mutual cooperation they will easily deal with the ever decreasing disturbances. The police force will have some kind of arms, but they will be rarely used, if at all. In fact policemen will be reformers."[86]

The function of this police would not be to put down labour strikes, as in a non-violent State "the influence of the non-violent majority will be so great as to command the respect of the principal elements in society"[87] and quarrels between labour and capital would therefore be few and far between. Similarly, it would not be employed to put down communal disturbances, or to suppress political opposition. Its function would primarily be to keep in check the anti-social elements.

Kher argued that the Congress Ministers had no non-violent

force at their disposal. Even if 500 *goondas* had run amok they would have wrought untold havoc. "I do not know how even you would have dealt with them."

Gandhiji answered that the Ministers on such occasions could have gone out and allowed themselves to be done to death by the goondas. This they had never tried. As the "dirty water from the gutter when it mixes with the water of the Ganges, becomes as pure as the Ganges water", even so he had expected that the goondas would work under the Congress discipline. But evidently the Ministers had not attained the "purifying potency of the fabled Ganges. . . . Let us face the fact that we had not the requisite Ahimsa. . . . I am sure that if we had adhered to strictest non-violence . . . the Congress would have made a tremendous advance in the direction of Ahimsa and also independence."

"The pity is," he remarked with his usual banter, "that no-one trusts me with the reins of Government! Otherwise I would show how to govern non-violently."[88]

For twenty years the Congress leaders had professed faith in non-violence. Ever since they had come into power in 1937, Gandhiji had been telling them that by holding to the trail they had blazed, they could make history. In a meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh, he once described how after the Congress Ministries in the Provinces had resigned on the issue of India's participation in the war, one of the Congress Ministers came and told him that while he had not given up an iota of non-violence, he could not do without minimum firing. He had to resort to it to the extent that it was unavoidable. "He may have said it then," commented Gandhiji, "he may not say it again if I can help it."[89] The reason why the Ministers had to resort to force was that the Congress majorities were not based on unadulterated non-violence. Before they went in again, they should make it clear to the people that they could send them as their representatives only if they would let them carry on Government on a non-violent basis. It did not matter if they failed. But the failure should "apply to our inability to govern, not to our inability to abstain from the use of force."[90] Rather than abandon non-violence, they should step aside and let those who swore by the use of force to govern. The people would then rally round them and make it possible for them govern non-violently.

But his had remained a voice in the wilderness. The conclusion slowly forced itself upon him that the ways of power are inseparable from the exercise of power. No-one who wields power can remain unaffected by it. The only way to make the State approximate to the ideal of non-violence is progressively to reduce its functions and to act upon it from outside by developing non-violent sanctions among the people. In other words, the more there is of social organisation and

spontaneous voluntary cooperation among the people, the less there will be of the State and the application of the sanctions which the State wields. In the past, before independence, constructive work organisations had been the source of the non-violent strength behind the Congress. What was to be the corresponding source of strength behind the free India Government? It was for the Congress to take up that role. The Congress leaders, as members of the Government which was based on force, might find themselves unable to renounce the use of force. But surely they had not made of force their ideal. No-one would be happier than they, Gandhiji fancied, if they could conduct the Government by non-violence. For that the Congress would have to be reconstituted on a new basis. It would have to lay upon itself a self-denying ordinance and keep out of power. He had been pressing that course on the Congress leaders ever since independence.

A few days before the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in November, 1947, Gandhiji mooted the idea that the political goal of the Congress having been achieved with the attainment of independence, the Congress ought voluntarily to liquidate itself. The dissolution of the Congress as a party would release the energy of all the progressive and patriotic elements in the country and harness it to the great task of nation building. There were many dynamic workers who could do a lot but the country was not getting the full benefit of their services owing to organisational differences. The Congress leaders were afraid that without the Congress machinery to back them, they would lose their hold over the electorate and the future of their new-born democracy would be jeopardised. Gandhiji regarded this as a sign of timidity incompatible with a nation builder's role. In the course of a conversation with a colleague he expressed his fear that the Congress leadership were losing the dauntless courage of their early fighting days and the habit of taking bold risks. "If we say to ourselves that Swaraj having been won, we can now afford to sit easy we shall be doing the country the greatest harm. Unless we can harness the energy of the entire nation to the work of nation building during the first five years of independence, the achievement of our last 30 years' struggle will be in jeopardy. Hitherto the fight with the British engaged all the energy of our people. That energy must now be mobilised to make the nation prosperous and strong, or else it will recoil upon us and breed discord and disruption."

He was deeply worried over the growing corruption and scramble for loaves and fishes in the Congress and discord and personal rivalries among members of the Congress High Command. After the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, he repeated his advice: "I am convinced that no patch-work treatment can save the Congress. It will only prolong the agony. The best thing for the Congress would be to dissolve itself before the rot sets in further. Its voluntary liquidation

will brace up and purify the political climate of the country. But I can see that I can carry nobody with me in this."

A letter in the second week of December, 1947, from a top-ranking Andhra leader, universally respected for his self-sacrifice, courage and integrity and affectionately nick-named during the early days of non-cooperation by the people as "the Gandhi of the South", revealed a shocking state of affairs. "I, old, decrepit, with a broken leg slowly limping on crutches within the walls of my house have no axe to grind," wrote this veteran of many a Satyagraha fight, to bring home to Gandhiji "the moral degradation into which the men in Congress circles have fallen."

> Several of the M.L.A.s and M.L.C.s, are following the policy 'make hay while the sun shines', making money by the use of influence even to the extent of obstructing the administration of justice in the criminal courts. . . . The district collectors and other revenue officials do not feel free in the discharge of their duties on account of the frequent interference by the M.L.A.s and M.L.C.s. . . . A strict and honest officer cannot hold his position. . . . The factions in the Congress circles and the weakness of the Ministers have been creating a rebellious spirit amongst the people at large. The people have begun to say that the British Government was much better and they are even cursing the Congress.

Commented Gandhiji on receiving the letter: "Our moral standards are going down at such a rate that I can now see why our Satyagraha fights in the past lacked the real content and were reduced to mere passive resistance of the weak." The only chance of saving the Congress was in having as a Congress President one who would act with firmness and impartiality in the midst of the growing welter of confusion. For that the Congress organisation would need to be beyond the pulls and strains of power politics. Otherwise it would disintegrate. Rather than that fate should overtake it, it was much better to dissolve it. "The letter from Andhra today is to me a sure sign of the decay and decline of the Congress. If all that is said therein is true, does it not show that we are fit only to be slaves?"

At his evening prayer gathering, on the 12th December, 1947, he warned: "Let the people of . . . other Provinces measure the words of this self-sacrificing servant of India. As he rightly says, the corruption described by him is no monopoly of Andhra. . . . Let us beware."

In the week following he again remarked that if a big national organisation like the Congress could not be purged of corruption, untruth and such other unseemly practices, and if its infiltration by

self-seekers could not be stopped, it was clear that its doom was sealed and he would not shed a tear if it disappeared. "If a patient cannot be cured of a fell disease, the best thing that can happen to him is to pass away."

There were pocket boroughs, bogus membership, the dead-weight of inert majorities and the electioneering mal-practices and hypocrisy of self-seekers. Everybody was anxious to get into the bandwagon of the Congress, now that the Congress was in power. The more Gandhiji saw of this, the more his conviction deepened that there was no other way of purging the Congress organisation of corruption except for the Congress to go out of power politics and let the administration be run through the people's representatives who would nevertheless be under Congress discipline. By keeping out of power politics and devoting itself exclusively to the building of the non-violent strength of the people the Congress would become the watchdog and guardian of the people's liberties.

In the last week of January, 1948, Gandhiji was explaining to Vincent Sheean (*Lead Kindly Light*) his theory of representative democracy backed by a non-violent sanction. The point at issue was: "If those who believe in the ideal of non-violence keep away from Government, Government will continue to be carried on by the use of force. How is then the transformation of the existing system of Government to be brought about?"

Gandhiji admitted that ordinarily Government was impossible without the use of force. "I have therefore said that a man who wants to be good and do good in all circumstances must not hold power."

"Is all Government to come to a standstill then?" he was asked.

"No," he replied. "He (the man of non-violence) can send those to the Government who represent his will. If he goes there himself, he exposes himself to the corrupting influence of power. But my representative holds power of attorney only during my pleasure. If he falls a prey to temptation, he can be recalled. I cannot recall myself. All this requires a high degree of intelligence on the part of the electorate. There are about half a dozen constructive work organisations. I do not send them to the Parliament. I want them to keep the Parliament under check by educating and guiding the voters."

"You mean to say that power always corrupts?"

"Yes."

On the same day in an article for *Harijan*, he wrote: "Indian National Congress . . . which has after many battles fought her non-violent way to freedom cannot be allowed to die. It can only die with the nation. A living organism ever grows or it dies. The Congress has won political freedom, but it has yet to win economic freedom, social and moral freedom. These freedoms are harder than the political, if only because they are constructive, less exciting and not

spectacular. All-embracing constructive work evokes the energy of all the units of the millions. The Congress has got the preliminary and necessary part of her freedom. The hardest has yet to come. In its difficult ascent to democracy, it has inevitably created rotten boroughs leading to corruption and creation of institutions, popular and democratic only in name. How to get out of the weedy and unwieldy growth?"[91]

He then proceeded to explain why it had become imperative for the Congress to apply that self-denying ordinance to itself and how it should refashion itself for its new role. Hitherto its franchise used to be based on four-anna primary membership. This was no longer enough. "The Congress *must* do away with its special register of members. . . . Its register should now be co-extensive with all the men and women in the voters' rolls in the country. The Congress business should be to see that no faked name gets in and no legitimate name is left out. On its own register it will have a body of servants of the nation who would be workers doing the work allotted to them from time to time."

A necessary consequence of this reorientation would be that the centre of gravity would have to shift from the urban to the rural. "Unfortunately for the country they (the workers) will be drawn chiefly for the time being from the city dwellers, most of whom would be required to work for and in the villages of India. The ranks must be filled in increasing numbers from villagers.

"These servants will be expected to operate upon and serve the voters registered according to law in their own surroundings. Many persons and parties will woo them. The very best will win. Thus and in no other way can the Congress regain its fast ebbing unique position in the country. But yesterday the Congress was unwittingly the servant of the nation, it was *khudai khidmatgar*—God's servant. Let it now proclaim to itself and to the world that it is only God's servant—nothing more, nothing less. *If it engages in the ungainly skirmish for power, it will find one fine morning that it is no more.* Thank God, it is now no longer in sole possession of the field." (Italics mine).

He had hoped to return to the subject in the columns of *Harijan* and discuss what the servants of the nation would have to do to raise themselves in the estimation of the masters, the whole of the adult population, male and female. This was not given him to do. But he outlined his ideas on this as well as on the reconstitution of the Congress in a draft plan, based upon the constitution committee's recommendations. It was prepared by him on the last day of his earthly sojourn, but it could be published only posthumously. It subsequently came to be known as his "Last Will and Testament" to the nation (see Appendix B).

The preamble of the draft ran: "Though split into two, India

having attained political independence through means devised by the Indian National Congress, the Congress in its present shape and form, i.e. as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine, has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns. . . . For these and other similar reasons, the All-India Congress Committee resolves to disband the existing Congress organisation and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh."

The Lok Sevak Sangh would affiliate the various existing constructive work organisations like All-India Spinners' Association, All-India Village Industries Association, Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Harijan Sevak Sangh, and the Go-seva Sangh.

The plan of organisation would be that every Panchayat of five adult men or women being villagers or village-minded would form a unit. Two such contiguous Panchayats would form a working party under a leader elected from among themselves. When there were one hundred such Panchayats, the fifty first-grade leaders would elect from among themselves a second-grade leader and so on, the first-grade leaders meanwhile working under the second-grade leader. Parallel groups of two hundred Panchayats would continue to be formed till they covered the whole of India, each succeeding groups of Panchayats electing a second-grade leader after the manner of the first. All second-grade leaders would serve jointly for the whole of India and severally for their respective areas. The second-grade leaders might elect, whenever they might deem necessary, from among themselves a chief who would, during pleasure, regulate and command all the groups. This body of servants would derive their authority or power purely from service "ungrudgingly and wisely done to their master, the whole of India."

After prescribing the necessary qualifications which every worker must possess, viz. that he should be a habitual wearer of Khadi, free from all addictions and vices, if a Hindu, should have abjured untouchability, be a believer in the principle of equal respect and regard for all religions and "equality of opportunity and status for all irrespective of race, creed or sex", the draft plan went on to detail the various functions of the workers. These pertained mostly to the elementary service and education of the villages, particularly with a view to attaining local and regional self-sufficiency in respect of their primary needs, with an emphasis on the non-violent aspect of it and wisely to guide them in the proper and intelligent use of their voting rights.

The last portion of the preamble to the "Last Will and Testament" referred to the impending struggle for ascendancy between the civil and the military power. "The struggle for the ascendancy of civil over military power is bound to take place in India's progress

towards its democratic goal. It (the Congress) must (therefore) be kept out of unhealthy competition with political parties and communal bodies."

India had an unbroken tradition of non-violence from times immemorial. But at no time in her ancient history had she complete non-violence in action pervading the whole land. Nevertheless it was Gandhiji's unquenchable faith that it was her destiny to deliver the message of non-violence to mankind. "Of all the countries in the world, India is the only country which can learn the art of non-violence. . . . If the test were applied even now, there would be found, perhaps, thousands of men and women who would be willing to die without harbouring malice against their persecutors."[92] It might take ages to come to fruition, he said, but so far as he could judge "no other country will precede her in the fulfilment of that mission."[93] If India took to the doctrine of the sword she would cease to be the pride of his heart. "India's acceptance of the doctrine of the sword will be the hour of my trial. I hope I shall not be found wanting. My religion has no geographical limits. If I have a living faith in it, it will transcend my love for India herself. My life is dedicated to service of India through the religion of non-violence."[94]

It seemed, testing time had at last arrived. It was for those who had faith in the method of non-violence to reaffirm their faith "to keep the lamp of non-violence burning bright." Even if a few remained true to their light in the midst of the impenetrable darkness all would be well. "The truth of a few will count, the untruth of millions will vanish even like chaff before a whiff of wind," he had said before.[95] He refused to believe that what could not be achieved during the struggle for independence was unachievable at all times. "On the contrary, today there is a real opportunity to demonstrate the supremacy of Ahimsa. True, our people have been sucked into the whirlpool of universal militarisation. If even a few can keep out of it, it will be their privilege to set an example of Ahimsa of the brave and be reckoned as the first servants of India. This cannot be demonstrated by mere intellect. Therefore till it can be realised through experience, it must be accepted in faith."

And this appeared in *Harijan* two days after his death.

CHAPTER XXIII

'ROCK OF AGES CLEFT FOR ME'

To him that overcometh will I give
to eat of the hidden manna.
Revelation II,17

1

I FOUND Gandhiji to be the saddest man that one could picture when I rejoined him in the middle of December, 1947. In the midst of the pomp and pageantry of the capital, surrounded by loving friends, and with his name on everybody's lips, he was spiritually isolated from his surroundings and from almost every one of his colleagues, who now held positions of power and prestige in the Government. The only political colleague of his who had remained unswerving in his loyalty to the creed of non-violence was Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and him the Congress decision to accept partition had made a citizen of Pakistan. A letter dictated by Gandhiji in the small hours of the night a few weeks earlier, ran: "I am surrounded by loving friends in this palatial building but inside me there is no peace. . . . Everything depends upon Delhi. I am trying to remove the impurity that has crept into us. I have no wish to witness my failure in this effort. I have shed the desire to live up to 125 years."

The discord among the Congress leaders in the Government and the aftermath of Junagadh occupied his thoughts. He did not feel very happy the way the Junagadh issue had been handled. It was not his way. Even in the matter of Kashmir, though he had expressed his admiration for the courage of the fighters and the unity of purpose and cohesion shown by all sections of the population to stem the tide of invasion, he felt that a golden opportunity had been let slip. The Indian Government had a perfect right, as the world understands right, to send and it did what was just the right thing for it to do in the circumstances in sending troops to the defence of Kashmir at the request of the Maharaja backed by that of the National Conference. But that again was not his way. He would have liked to see the whole of India rally to the side of the defenders in non-violent defence of their soil against aggression. The aggression was so unprovoked, he felt, and the case of the defenders so manifestly just that if the people of Kashmir had resisted the invasion non-violently to the last, it would

have won the admiration and sympathy of the whole world. "I would like to go to Kashmir myself," he once remarked to me while going to meet Lord Mountbatten towards the close of December. "I am sure if the people followed my way, victory would be theirs." With a sigh he added: "If only the situation in Delhi would let me."

His effort to groom Suhrawardy for the role the latter had taken up since he had thrown in his lot with him at Calcutta continued. He had expected him to cultivate the Indian Muslims and induce them to surrender all illicit arms. As a loyal citizen of the Indian Union that Shaheed claimed to be and as an ex-colleague of Jinnah and a true friend of Pakistan he owed it to himself, to India and to Pakistan, Gandhiji felt, to proclaim the truth about India and Pakistan with courage and conviction as an impartial observer and publicly to denounce and dissociate himself in unequivocal terms from Pakistan's policy in regard to its minorities if he found that he could not get Jinnah to ensure fair treatment to them. Further to prove his *bona fides*, he suggested that even at the risk of his life Shaheed should go and stay in a Hindu quarter in Delhi, as they had done together in Calcutta, and try to win the confidence of all by the selfless service of Hindu and Muslim refugees. Suhrawardy promised everything, but as usual balked at performance.

Refugees came to Gandhiji's residence at all hours in droves—despairing, frenzied, distraught, sometimes raving mad. The stark misery and suffering of the vast uprooted humanity on both sides, and even more than that the resulting callousness, degradation and brutalisation of the human spirit that he saw around him, ate into him. Once when it had rained during the night, on getting up at 3.30 for the morning prayer, he began to ruminate aloud: "While we live in this palatial mansion and sleep cozily wrapped in warm quilts, poor homeless refugees and their little children in the refugee camps must be shivering in the raw winter cold and soaking rain." Through no fault of theirs they were paying the price for the partition, a decision which their leaders had made and the consequences of which they had failed either to foresee or provide for. Lip sympathy with the refugees was the order of the day. But mere words of sympathy when they continued to suffer while their sympathisers had all the creature comforts, sounded hollow to the ear, even cruel. "Sometimes I ask myself," remarked Gandhiji one day, "what right have I to live in this mansion or to use even an inch of room beyond my strict requirement, when so many of our countrymen are denied even the elementary decencies of life." And he suggested that this was the question that every national leader and dweller in a bungalow ought to put to himself in that crisis and act accordingly. The people would then take pride in their suffering and the biting winter cold would lose some of its sting. But as a matter of fact everybody was busy with his own affairs; no-one had even the time to listen. His remained a voice in the wilderness.

Some time afterwards, it was proposed to requisition for governmental purpose a bungalow adjacent to Birla House where some refugees were staying. The refugees complained to Gandhiji about it. Gandhiji advised the Rehabilitation Ministry against the eviction of the refugees. The Ministry tried to justify the proposed action. He answered: "Why do you not then evict me first and take possession of Birla House? Why cannot the Ministers put their spacious bungalows at the disposal of the State, reserving for themselves just enough space for their needs?" As a result of his intervention, the refugees were left undisturbed. But Gandhiji was not fully satisfied. "How long can they carry on like this, doing things just to please me?" he asked.

Searching according to his wont for the cause of the outer in the inner, he resumed: "There must be some subtle flaw somewhere in my conception and practice of truth and Ahimsa of which this is the result. I mistook the non-violence of the weak, which is no non-violence at all, for true non-violence. Perhaps God purposely blinded me. But that is the wrong way of putting it. I should rather say that I was blind. I could not see. Thank God for His abundant mercy that before the close, he has woken me up so that I have been able to see my mistake in time. My only prayer now is that He may vouchsafe to me the strength to meet death bravely when the time comes."

As the inner travail deepened, the search-light which he turned upon himself and upon others became more and more fierce. The frippery of some of the socialite women going to work in the refugee camps jarred upon him. "How can they (the refugees) have any confidence in you or respect for you," he remarked admonishing one such, "when you go among them like up-to-date Eves decked out in silks? . . . I do not care if only half a dozen of you go. If there is simplicity, sincerity and purity within and without, your work will flourish. After doing full justice to your over-loaded breakfast tables in your spacious bungalows you alight from posh cars dangling your stylish vanity bags, while those you are supposed to serve cannot even afford the luxury of a bath for lack of a change of clothes. . . . Social service these days has become a means for getting on in the world. Many socialites have consequently taken to this profitable hobby. There are of course exceptions but they are all so few and far between. I want women workers who would set an example in self-help, simplicity, and dignity of labour."

He had been distressed to find too that there was very little inclination on the part of the pillars of the various constructive work organisations to unite with a view to coordinating the activities of their respective organisations. How could he expect to unite Hindus and Muslims, he remarked, if even constructive workers could not unite among themselves. To those who complained that the Government was not

giving enough aid to constructive work institutions, he replied that they should expect none, much less depend upon it. The Government was bound sooner or later to realise that there was no salvation for the country or any solution to the people's immediate problems except by working out the constructive programme in full. "Today our new found independence seems to have gone to our head. Our minds are hypnotised by the glamour of the scientific progress and the 'expanding economy' of the West. Those in authority do not seem to have a clear picture of the realities of our social, political and economic life. But as we gain in experience we shall realise that if we want our country to stand on its legs, it can only be through village industries; if we want our country to advance culturally it can only be by giving Hindustani its due place as our lingua franca." If constructive workers thought, he went on to say, that with a Congress Government in power, their responsibility had ended and everything had become Government's responsibility, and if the Government refused to shoulder it, there was nothing left for them but to despair, they were vastly mistaken. On the contrary their testing time was only now. The future was theirs if they had patience, perseverance and faith. In a letter written in the last week of December he wrote: "It won't do on our part to relax in the matter of Khadi. To the extent to which we are remiss in this, to that extent we shall fail. . . . It is my certain conviction that it is the power generated by the frail Charkha thread that has brought us so far. If we had shown more diligence turning the spinning-wheel, we would not have come to our present pass. . . . Let me repeat once again that if four hundred millions of independent India are to live in health and vigour we have to dedicate ourselves to constructive work, otherwise we shall go under."

In the course of a conversation with Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President, some time later, he remarked: "One brick after another in the Congress edifice is loosening and coming off. The Congress has become lustreless. We should either keep before us the pledges we gave to the people and duly implement them or plainly admit that all we said before was mere rhetoric that can have no place in practical administration."

He became more and more relentless in regard to himself and he gave it to understand that everybody around him had to do likewise. As a result of the severe cold several members of his party fell ill but he remained unmoved. It is not climatic changes that is the cause of our illness, he maintained, but failure in our practice of Ramanama. "Seasons were created . . . for man's good. Whatever nature does is for the good of the entire creation. But we fail to perceive this and so we blame nature." For himself, in spite of the freezing cold, he insisted on using cold water for the morning wash. His hand was shaking with cold as one day after the morning prayer he

sat down to work. Seeing a heap of used envelopes lying on the floor of his room, he set about scissors in hand to cut them open and turn them into scribbling pads. When some one remarked that he was shivering, he answered that it was not due to cold. "Natural cold is good for the system. It is bracing. What gives me the shivers is the poverty and destitution of our masses. When will it end? But ensconced cozily in this luxurious palace you cannot think of this. . . . If you had known the value of these scraps to one born in poverty, lacking writing paper, you would not have let them lie here as waste paper."

By an almost superhuman effort of the will he was able in the midst of all this to preserve his balance and even his good humour. Everybody who came to him found him all attention, all serenity, all sweetness, full of the usual sunshine of his good humour. He seemed to have access to some hidden reservoir of strength, optimism, joy and peace, which was independent of outer circumstances and which was communicated to everybody who came in contact with him. Pandit Nehru, Maulana Azad, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Sardar Patel—seasoned soldiers and veteran fighters all—came to him daily, often with grave, careworn faces, drawn looks, and heads bent under the load they carried. But within minutes of their arrival, Gandhiji's room would be ringing with loud peals of their laughter and when they left, it was with a light heart and a bright, joyous countenance, as if they had left all their cares and worries behind with the unaging, perennially young old man whose spirit seemed to grow younger as he advanced in years. Asked by a Chinese visitor what sustained him in the midst of the daily shocks and disappointments, he answered: "I have made the ability to maintain my serenity even in the midst of brutality all round the test and goal of all my striving. My faith in God sustains my will to live so that I may serve Him by serving suffering humanity."

But inside, the nerves were taut and tensed almost to the breaking point. The ceaseless crucifixion of the spirit was the price he had to pay for the strength and purification he needed for the purification of others. Time and again he complained of his proneness to irritability which he had to struggle to keep down. One sentence that was constantly on his lips was, "Don't you see, I am mounted on my funeral pyre?" and sometimes when he wanted particularly to bring home a peremptory warning: "You should know it is a corpse that is telling you this." He was literally praying, he said, that God should gather him into His bosom and deliver him from the agony that life to him had become. Sometimes he asked himself whether he had not become a dead-weight on his colleagues and on the country, an anachronism and a misfit in the new era that was shaping around him, and which he had done more than anyone else to shape. "We are now deserting the good vessel that has brought us to port," he remarked to a member

of the Congress Working Committee one day. "There was a time when nobody believed that India could win her independence by non-violence. But now that independence has become a reality, we are bidding fair to say good-bye to non-violence. . . . If India has no further use for Ahimsa, can she have any for me? I would not in the least be surprised if in spite of all the homage that the national leaders pay to me, they were one day to say: 'We have had enough of this old man; why does not he leave us alone?' "

Nature does not tolerate such a state of things for long. Either the environment is transformed or the misfit goes. Which of these had Providence in store for us? How long could the earthly tabernacle stand the strain? These were the questions that assailed my mind as I watched day after day the wan, sad look on that pinched face, bespeaking an inner anguish that was frightening to behold.

2

The battle for undivided India had been lost in the last ditch. But for Gandhiji it had restarted in the ditch behind, in the ditch in front, and in the ditches all around. He had never ceased to hope that the organic unity between the two parts of India might yet be realised in spite of the political division, if the Indian Union remained true to its ideal. But under the stresses and strains set up by the post-partition troubles, that hope now threatened to crumble. Partition had left nearly 40 million Muslims in the Indian Union. The bulk of them had, under the Muslim League's propaganda, given their active or passive support to the division of India. The top Muslim League leaders had since migrated to Pakistan, leaving the rank and file of their coreligionists in a quandary—a confused, demoralised leaderless mass, without a clearly defined policy or goal. Their emotional loyalty was still with the League. But the essential condition of their existence in the Indian Union as equal citizens was unreserved loyalty to the Indian Union. It was the same with the Hindus of East Pakistan. Their leaders had, after canvassing their support for the partition of Bengal, provided themselves with comfortable berths in West Bengal, leaving them in the lurch. There was, however, this difference. They had nobody in Pakistan as the Indian Muslims had Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru in the Indian Union to champion their cause. Everybody who had voted for partition was paying the price—the Indian Muslims, the Hindus and the Sikhs in Pakistan, not to mention the refugees on both sides. They all felt unhappy, bitterly disillusioned. Observed the leader of the Muslim League party in the Orissa Assembly: "The Muslims of the Indian Union now realise that they have committed a blunder in supporting the movement for Pakistan. The sponsors of

Pakistan forgot the pledge given to us, minorities, and in the exuberance of joy committed overt acts which led the non-Muslim minorities to apprehend danger at the hands of the Muslim majority."[1]

Beneath the surface calm lurked dark suspicion. Obstinate questionings on both sides were more often suppressed than squarely faced and answered. The utterances of the leaders of Pakistan from across the border, their propaganda of exaggeration and hate against the Indian Union, and their lip-championship of the cause of the Indian Muslims did the Indian Muslims little good, but needlessly deepened Hindu fears and made confusion worse confounded. The Indian Muslims were encouraged to look to Pakistan for help, instead of cultivating the goodwill of their non-Muslim neighbours and living down the prejudice against them by identifying themselves with the country whose citizens they claimed to be. Sardar Patel, the stern realist, sounded a note of warning: "I believe in plain speaking. I want to tell the Muslims frankly that . . . at this critical juncture . . . it is your duty to sail in the same boat and sink or swim together (with us). . . . You cannot ride on two horses. . . . You select one horse, whichever you like best."[2] The more sensible section among the Muslims saw this. The leader of the Muslim League party in the Constituent Assembly of India, Khaliquzaman, was constrained to tell his erstwhile colleagues across the border to mind their own business and leave the Indian Muslims alone.[3] The leader of the Muslim League party in the Orissa Assembly appealed to the Indian Muslims: "Let us now forget the two-nation theory and owe allegiance to the Indian Union inasmuch as in spite of platitudes by the Pakistanists, they cannot do anything for our safety and it would be futile for us to look to them for protection."[4]

But the bulk of the pro-League section of the Muslims were sullen, when not actively disloyal. Some of them had the indiscretion openly to brag that they were lying low and biding their time but surely their hour would come. All this provided a fruitful soil for Hindu Chauvinism. Its most serious manifestation was infiltration of the Hindu middle class and even the Government services by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (R.S.S.). It had begun to command the secret sympathy even of a section of Hindu Congressmen.

The R.S.S. was a communalist, para-military, Fascist organisation, controlled from Maharashtra. The key-positions were held almost exclusively by the Maharashtrians. Their declared object was to set-up Hindu Raj. They had adopted the slogan, "Muslims clear out of India." At the time they were not very active, at least overtly, but it was being darkly hinted that they were only waiting for all the Hindus and Sikhs in West Pakistan to be evacuated. They would then wreak full vengeance on the Indian Muslims for what Pakistan had done.

Gandhiji was determined not to be a living witness to such a

tragedy. The Muslims were now in a minority in the Indian Union. Why should they feel insecure as to their future as equal citizens in the Indian Union? There was much they had to answer for and correct. But it was up to the majority community to be magnanimous and to forgive and forget. It hurt him to see anyone live under fear, unable to walk with his head erect. Eager always to champion the cause of the under-dog and to identify himself with the down and out, he set himself to put heart into the Indian Muslims. They had to be helped to reorganise themselves, rid themselves of the canker of divided loyalty and regain their integrity, dignity and self-respect so that they might legitimately take pride in being the nationals of free India on a footing of equality with the rest in every respect. If he succeeded in that, he would feel within him the strength to call upon Pakistan to join India in the race for doing good.

In December, 1947, the Muslim League Council, in a two-day session at Karachi, decided to have two separate Muslim League organisations. One would be for Pakistan, to which non-Muslims would not be eligible for membership. The other would be for the Indian Union. The representatives from the U.P. (India) had opposed the continuation of the League in the Indian Union. But the West Punjab (Pakistan) block favoured its continuation, and Jinnah supported their view.

As a sequel to the Muslim League Council's decision, two conferences of the Muslims were held in the Indian Union in the last week of December. The nationalist Muslims met at Lucknow, and the Muslim Leaguers at Madras. On the eve of these conferences, some Muslim friends came to Gandhiji and asked him whether they should attend the meetings in question or not. Gandhiji told them that, if they were invited, they should attend both the gatherings, and at each gathering express their views fearlessly and frankly. In the course of one of his prayer addresses he observed that the fact that Muslims in India found themselves in a minority, without protection from their Muslim brethren in Pakistan, was "no disadvantage" if they had at all followed the technique of non-violence which he had been presenting to the people of India during the last thirty years. But it was not necessary for them, he went on to say, to have faith in non-violence to be able to appreciate the fact that a minority, however small it may be, has never really any cause for fear as to the preservation of its honour and all that must be near and dear to man:

> Man is so made that if he understood his Maker and himself as made in His image, no power on earth could rob him of self-respect except he himself. A dear English friend in Johannesburg, while I was fighting the mighty Government of the Transvaal, told me that he always made common cause with

> minorities. For, he said, they were hardly ever in the wrong and if they were, they could be weaned from it without difficulty, whereas majorities could not be, owing to the intoxication that power gave them. The friend had uttered a great truth. . . . The Union Muslims are now free from the oppressiveness they were under whilst they were falsely proud of the Muslim majority in the West and in the East. If they will realise the virtue of being in a minority, they will know that they can now express in their own lives the best that is in Islam. Will they remember that Islam gave its best during the Prophet's ministry in Mecca, Christianity waned when Constantine came to it.[5]

In the third week of December two prominent Muslim Leaguers came to Gandhiji and said to him that the Indian Muslims were eager to join the Congress. Their profession of eagerness to join the Congress, when he knew and they knew that there was a strong prejudice against them in the Congress and they would not be received there without mental reservations, filled Gandhiji with humiliation. "I do not like this scramble," he told them. "The Muslims have the right, but I would rather that they waited till the Congress was ready to welcome them with open arms. Today that warmth is lacking. In the existing circumstances, it would be best for them to serve the Congress from outside even as I am doing." At the evening prayer meeting he observed:

> That I have an influence (in the Congress) without being a member is because I have served it faithfully ever since my return from South Africa in 1915. Every Muslim can do so from now and he will find that his services are as much valued as mine. Today every Muslim is assumed to be a Leaguer and, therefore, to be an enemy of the Congress. Such unfortunately has been the teaching of the League.
>
> There is now not the slightest cause for enmity. Four months are too short a period to be free from the communal poison. . . . I would, therefore, urge the Muslim minority to rise superior to the poisonous atmosphere and live down the thoughtless prejudice by proving by their exemplary conduct that the only honourable way of living in the Union is that they should be full citizens without any mental reservations.[6]

As for the Muslim League, he was clear that like other non-Muslim communal bodies it could not continue any longer as a political organisation. "They may function as religious organisations for internal religious reform for the purpose of exploring the best and living the best that is in their religions."[7] Then these organisations would purify the atmosphere of all poison and vie with one another

in well-doing. "Their political ambition can be satisfied only through the Congress, whether they are in it or not."[8]

Another Muslim friend came and told Gandhiji that he had now become a "staunch advocate" of Hindi as the national language of India and was "asking his friends to learn it as soon as possible." Gandhiji darted a sad piercing glance at him and told him that of course every Muslim should learn Hindi as every Hindu should know Urdu, or for that matter as many Indian languages as possible. For himself, he added, he would stand for Hindustani as the national language even though the Constituent Assembly might decide otherwise and even though in this he might find himself all alone. But the obsequious homage to Hindi that he had just heard was wholly out of season. It had pained him deeply.

As has already been noted, under the partition plan, Government employees in the partitioned Provinces and those serving under the Central Government were given the option to serve either in the Indian Union or in Pakistan. In the result Muslims, on the whole, had opted for Pakistan, and the Hindus for India. But some Muslims principally from the postal and railway departments, who had in the first instance opted for Pakistan "for the sake of propaganda", as they put it, wanted to be given a chance to reconsider their decision. Some other Muslims complained that they had been discharged from their posts, presumably on the ground of suspected anti-Hindu bias. Gandhiji told them that while his sympathies were with them, the right course for them was not to resent "pardonable suspicion" although it might be unjustified in individual cases. "Until the dominating and corroding communal poison is eliminated, I think it is necessary and dignified for Muslims not to aim at the loaves and fishes in Government employment. Power comes from sincere service. Actual attainment often debases the holder."[9]

Thus like a wise friend and guide, he missed no opportunity to restore to the Indian Muslims their lost fibre while bringing home to them their errors which they had to live down and from the consequence of which there was no escape.

3

Many mosques in the capital had been damaged and occupied by the refugees during the disturbances. Some of them had been converted into temples by the refugees who had installed idols in them. Gandhiji had been shown one such mosque in Connaught Circus, in the very heart of the capital. But when he drew Sardar Patel's attention to it, to his surprise the Sardar seemed to be incredulous. His officers had given him a different report.

In the beginning of November, Gandhiji, in a note to Sardar Patel, had suggested that an announcement should be made that no sacrilege would be suffered in regard to mosques and if any damage occurred to them, repairs would be effected by the Government. Two days later a communique was issued by the Delhi administration giving seven days' notice to the non-Muslims to vacate all mosques, failing which the police would eject them by force. The Government further decided to repair the damaged mosques.

This was good as far as it went. But Gandhiji said that unless the idols were removed and mosques repaired by the Hindus themselves he would not feel satisfied. Restitution of places of worship by the use of military or police force was a travesty—no restitution at all.

The Muslims made grave allegations against Sardar Patel and his officers. The latter, they alleged, were turning the blind eye to the looting of Muslim shops. While making a pretence of taking action, they were actually telling the refugee crowds to come in their numbers so that the police could afterwards plead helplessness in the face of "superior numbers". Gandhiji arranged a meeting between their spokesmen and three of the senior members of the Cabinet to thrash out the whole matter in his presence. The meeting was repeated on the 25th December, when the police chief of Delhi was also present. Gandhiji did not feel very satisfied with the result. Quite a proportion of the police and military personnel in Delhi had their homes in the West Punjab and the Frontier Province, now part of Pakistan. Some had been recruited from among the ranks of the refugees as an emergency measure. The wisdom of this was open to question. A number of them had lost their near and dear ones. The relations of others had suffered indignities worse than death during the disturbances and they were now all thrown upon them as homeless destitutes, turning their homes into miniature refugee camps. The atmosphere in these homes was anything but healthy. Deep resentment and bitterness against the Muslims was the order of the day. The women folk, as might naturally be expected, were even more distraught and resentful than the men. The police did not openly defy Government's orders. But very often they let their deep personal bitterness get the better of their sense of duty and discipline.

These were the agents through whom the administration had to be carried on. Sardar Patel was a much harassed man, very ill too. The machine of which he was in charge could be run only in a particular way. He had to rely on his officers. They were his eyes and ears. He could not afford to lose their loyalty by putting too heavy a strain on it, or allow their morale to be affected in the difficult times through which they were passing. Gandhiji found himself in a very anomalous position. He was not in the Government. The tempo of

things very often left hardly any time to act through the normal channels. To tackle urgent and immediate problems that brooked no delay he had often to avail himself of the medium of his prayer address broadcasts. These became for the public and all concerned unofficial orders of the day. At the same time he did not want to do anything which might have even the appearance of intrusion or interference. He was treading on very thin ice. Everybody's nerves were on edge. He had to be extremely cautious. On one occasion we find him writing to the Sardar: "After meeting Randhawa (Deputy Commissioner of Delhi) I felt it would save your time if I wrote to him directly. Would it be in order?"[10]

Mirabehn had been able to make some very fruitful contacts with the British military officers in 1942, when the Government became panicky under the stress of war. She asked Gandhiji whether she could not do something like that to get things set right in Delhi. The reply he gave her was significant: "These are not old days. Now there are wheels within wheels. You cannot do any useful service by seeing these military men except as friendly faces, who will give warm welcome but nothing else."[11]

"People expect much from me," he observed at one of the prayer meetings, "but they must realise that I am not running the Government." Those at the helm of affairs were his friends, but he did not, he went on to say, want anyone to accept his advice merely out of friendship or regard for him. They should do so only if it went home. If the Ministers and their secretaries and the lower staff, including the police, would listen to him, things would be very different. But that could not be. The Ministers had inherited the old machinery from the British rulers and they were making the best of it.[12]

Attempts to occupy Muslim houses continued. Again and again, the police had to use tear gas. On the 3rd January, 1948, a party of refugees tried to effect unauthorised entry into some vacant Muslim houses. They put women and children in front to evade police action. Gandhiji characterised this as an "affront to womanhood". He knew, he remarked three days later, that it was hard to lie in the open in the biting cold of Delhi. When it rained, tents were not sufficient protection, but the squeezing out of the Muslims that was going on was both crooked and ungentlemanly. He could have understood their clamouring for houses, he said, if they had not made the Muslim houses their special target. They could have come to Birla House, turned him and the owners out and occupied the house. "That would be open dealing, though not gentlemanly." The fact that they insisted on occupying Muslim houses even though the authorities had offered them alternative accommodation clearly showed that it was not necessity that prompted them but the wish to get Delhi cleared of the Muslims. It was much better to tell the Muslims to go away, if such was the

general wish, than to drive them away by such devious tactics.

There were stresses and strains within the Cabinet too. The temperamental difference between Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel had always been there. And then there was a difference in regard to their respective approach to various questions. The Sardar had the highest regard personally for Pandit Nehru, and his matchless qualities of head and heart. But he complained that his chief had surrounded himself with bad counsellors, did not show sufficient confidence in him and got himself lost in abstractions and generalities which defeated his good intentions. Pandit Nehru on his part was dissatisfied with the Sardar's way of handling various questions, though he yielded to none in his appreciation of his shrewd common-sense, administrative genius, drive and unsurpassed fighting qualities. Driven between his own commitments and convictions and the pressure of his colleague's iron will, Pandit Nehru sometimes found himself in a quandary. Both the Sardar and Pandit Nehru had by turns been allergic to Gandhiji's approach to sundry issues. But neither of them could do without Gandhiji, and Gandhiji had come to the conclusion that the country needed the services of them both in the Government. In spite of their differences the two had cooperated as disciplined soldiers and loyal friends and comrades for nearly thirty years during the struggle for freedom. Nor had their differences in the past detracted from their mutual affection and esteem. But since independence, these differences had begun, more and more, to assume a practical shape and even to affect their personal relations. For instance, there were the R.S.S. To Sardar Patel they were "patriots though misguided". His quarrel with them was not that they were communalist fanatics who had adopted the formula of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth in respect of the Muslims but that by taking the law into their own hands they tended to "weaken the administration" when the "situation demanded that they should strengthen the hands of the Government."[13] He wanted Congressmen to wean them from their ways "by their love". He had no patience with those who were in favour of stern measures to put them down like any other breakers of the law. In one of his speeches he observed: "In Congress there are some in power who feel that by virtue of authority they will be able to crush the R.S.S. You cannot crush an organisation by using the rod. . . . After all R.S.S. men are not thieves and dacoits. They are patriots, who love their country; only their trend of thought is misdirected."[14] It was an unfortunate utterance. Could the patriotic motive condone deeds in themselves heinous? Obviously he had not foreseen what this softness would cost the country before long. When later the R.S.S. showed itself in its true colours, he was appalled and took prompt action—unfortunately when it was too late.

The delimitation of powers and functions of the Prime Minister vis-a-vis his Cabinet colleagues had never been clearly effected. Had the Prime Minister a special function as a "coordinator and supervisor" covering all the other Ministries? If so, how was that function to be discharged without interference with the functioning of other Ministries? This particularly affected the relations between Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel. The problem was by no means atypical. It is inherent in the Cabinet system of Government. Acute differences of policy between two powerful colleagues in the Cabinet is generally resolved by a showdown between them—one of the two eliminating the other—if the differences cannot be otherwise reconciled. But Gandhiji's non-violence had introduced a new dimension in Indian politics. It was possible, he had shown, to guide power without oneself being in power. Both Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel were big enough in their own right not to depend upon office for their position in the country. Instead of one trying to eliminate the other, each was prepared to eliminate himself in favour of the other in the interest of smooth running of the Government and both had written to Gandhiji to that effect.

Unfortunately, there were not lacking partisans and sycophants on both sides who played up these differences, and some members of the services were not above exploiting them for self-advancement. A section of the foreign correspondents took special relish in advertising these differences as a "split" in the Indian Cabinet, garnishing their description with all sorts of fantastic surmises, inferences and forecasts—the wish being father to the thought.

Gandhiji was afraid that the growing rift between the Congress leaders would be exploited by Pakistan. It almost seemed that Pakistan was banking upon a split and was only biding for its opportunity. Even more painful to Gandhiji personally was the fact that the Governor-General was being drawn into these bickerings. "Why should we allow Mountbatten to take such interest in our family quarrels—his best intentions notwithstanding?" he exclaimed to a Congress colleague. It was no reflection on Mountbatten the man. Gandhiji had the fullest confidence in him. But it was humiliating for India. Gandhiji had been trying in his own way to bridge these differences and from what he knew of the parties, he had not a shadow of a doubt as to the ultimate result. They were both patriots to the core. Neither of them had any axe to grind and they lived only to serve their common motherland. Soon after I had rejoined him at Delhi, Gandhiji remarked to me one day: "Each of them—the Sardar, Pandit Nehru and Mountbatten—is playing his game with consummate skill—with the purest of motives and with the sole purpose of serving India according to his lights. And I am playing mine," he added, "and it alone is going to prevail in the end. There is no

salvation for India except through my way. Mountbatten at least has seen this."

4

The Kashmir question had of late been becoming graver and graver every day. The issue of divesting the Maharaja of absolute powers was still hanging fire. "Is it true what they say about the conduct of the Kashmir State troops during the post-partition troubles?" Gandhiji asked Sheikh Abdullah during one of his visits to the capital in the last week of December, 1947. The latter admitted that "unfortunately" it was true. Gandhiji blazed forth: "How dare you weaken then on the issue of the curtailment of the Maharaja's powers without betraying your trust?" Pandit Nehru had boundless confidence in Sheikh Abdullah but Sardar Patel had his doubts. Gandhiji, while insisting upon the Maharaja's abdicating his absolute power, according to his wont, told Sheikh Abdullah about the Sardar's fears. It was for him to remove them. The slightest deviation from the straight path would spell his downfall.

He likened the Kashmir question to a glowing match-stick in a rick of hay. "You never can tell when it may light up and the whole thing go up in a blaze." It was for the Indian Union, he insisted, to set its house in order and do absolute justice even though the heavens fell. In a conversation with a Parsi friend from Bombay and an officer of the Indian Air Force, he let himself go, pouring forth for nearly three quarters of an hour the pent up lava as he walked up and down his room in Birla House in deep agitation. Let alone Kasmir, he said, he would not mind the loss of the whole of princely India if it could be retained only by the sacrifice of the principles for which the Indian Union stood, viz. full justice and equal treatment to the minorities and punishment of the wrong-doers without fear or favour. An India reduced in size but purged in spirit might still be the nursery of the non-violence of the brave and take up the moral leadership of the world, bringing the message of hope and deliverance to the oppressed and exploited races. But an unwieldy, soulless India would merely be a third rate imitation of the Western military States, utterly powerless to stand up against their onslaught. If India failed to curtail the powers of the Maharaja of Kashmir, he warned, India's reputation would be tarnished throughout the Muslim world. They must not forget, he remarked continuing his warning, the substance of which he repeated some time later in one of his prayer addresses, that Muslims were a numerous community spread all over the world. India stood for friendship with the whole world. How could she afford to be indifferent to their goodwill and friendship? He was no fortune-teller, he went on to say, but it required no special gift of pre-science to know that if for

any reason Hindus and Muslims of India could not be friends one of the other, the whole of the Muslim world would be antagonised and both India and Pakistan would once again as a result of their dissensions pass under foreign domination.

The tension between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue reached almost the breaking point, and war clouds began to gather on the horizon in the first week of January, 1948. "The situation here is most dangerous," wrote Gandhiji in a letter to a co-worker. "Mountbatten is trying his level best in the matter of Kashmir." But whatever might happen anywhere else, the letter went on to say, Bihar and Bengal had to keep out of the communal conflagration. If any disturbance happened there, they would find him dead.

"At any rate, I won't be there alive to witness it," he remarked to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, referring to the possibility of a war between India and Pakistan. "Is our independence going to end in such a fratricide?"

There was some uneasy speculation in regard to the position of Mountbatten as the Governor-General in the event of outbreak of hostilities between the two Dominions. There were some who, in the prevailing surcharged atmosphere, were inclined to see in the Kashmir imbroglio the hidden British hand. Severely deprecating such loose talk Gandhiji remarked to Dr. Rajendra Prasad that he for one did not believe that the British Government could have a direct hand in the happenings in Kashmir. He had implicit faith in the integrity of Mountbatten. He was sure, he said, that so long as he was there as the Governor-General, he would not countenance any dishonourable act on his country's part.

Gandhiji had never concealed his disapproval of the Indian Union's taking the Kashmir dispute to the U.N.O. instead of treating it as a domestic issue which ought to be settled amongst themselves. But he did not wish to confuse those who were handling the question in the way they knew by dividing their mind. So, when India's representative to the U.N.O., Gopalaswamy Ayyengar, came to see him prior to his departure for the U.S.A. to represent India's case during the debate on Kashmir, Gandhiji said to him: "You must understand that your way and mine are different. You should, therefore, either make up your mind to follow my path and settle the issue by direct negotiations, using the good offices of anyone you like from amongst ourselves or, if necessary, with the help of any country in Asia, or frankly and openly take an independent line."

The dying year closed for Gandhiji on a scene of unrelieved gloom, lighted only by his faith. A letter written by him in the third week of December ran: "May be the country is experiencing the rapture of independence as you say, but I cannot see it in the faces of the people who come to me. May be, being myself devoid of joy, I, like a person afflicted by jaundice, see what is within me in every-

body's face. . . . Therefore I say, let each do his duty according to his light. Then all will be well." And he quoted a verse from the Gita which says: "Self is self's best friend, as also its worst enemy."

Taking stock of the situation around him in another letter he wrote: "During the struggle against the British, we used to feel it was a hard fight but today I find that it was child's play compared with what confronts us today. We could then exaggerate—even make a mountain of a molehill—denouncing the British. But what is one to say today now that we are applying the axe to our own feet? We turn away from the challenge of duty. There cannot be *surajya* (good Government) unless we have effected self-purification. But independence overtook us before we could do that. That is why we are where we are today."

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur brought a number of English friends one night to meet him. "No human being or religious institution is perfect in this imperfect world," he said to them in the course of conversation. "Religious institutions are an answer to the challenge of the age and the particular circumstances prevailing at the time. Today we worship Christ but the Christ in the flesh we crucified. Stoning prophets and erecting churches to their memory afterwards has been the way of the world through the ages. They in the past could at least plead in mitigation that they did not know what they were doing. We can offer no such defence. And as the Confucian saying goes, 'To know what is right and not to do it is cowardice.'" In theory, he went on to say, a perfect religion was possible. But mankind had not known any so far "just as no man can claim to have seen God. It is this that has been the goal of my aspiration and striving for the last sixty years. I cannot claim to have attained complete success but I feel I am coming closer to it every day and that is enough for me."

"When I have attained it," he remarked a few days later, "the glow of my Ahimsa will pervade every quarter."

Among those who came to offer New Year's greetings to Gandhiji was a visitor from Siam. He complimented Gandhiji on the independence that India had attained as a result of his labours. It had intensified the longing for freedom in all countries. Disclaiming the compliment, Gandhiji replied that what they in India had attained was in his eyes no independence at all. "Today not everybody can move about freely in the capital. Indian fears his brother Indian. Is this independence?"

On the following day he wrote: "Today man fears man, neighbour distrusts neighbour. . . . The metropolis of independent India looks like the City of the Dead. . . . How strange that the peace of a country that won its independence through Ahimsa is deemed to be safe only under the protection of *himsa*!!!" "Perhaps you think that Delhi is at peace," he wrote in another letter. "It is so on the surface

but there is no peace in the hearts of the people. Only the force of arms is keeping the trouble under check. I am waiting for the direction of the inner voice."

During his bath he remarked: "The ordeal this time is going to be much more severe. . . . I am straining my ear to catch the whispering of the inner voice and waiting for its command."

On the 4th January, the Delhi Maulanas came to see Gandhiji as usual while he was having his morning meal. They said to him: "We are in a predicament. We have no other support left besides you. We can no longer depend on the police." Gandhiji expressed deep sympathy with them. The police had become corrupt. It was deplorable. But while he was fighting their battle, he told his visitors, the nationalist Muslims had to do their part. If they used their influence to keep the mass of Indian Muslims on the right path in spite of all provocations, the Hindus and Sikhs were bound to come round in due course. Then, Pakistan was threatening war on India. They had to ponder well where their duty lay in that crisis. If they felt that what Pakistan was doing was right, nothing further remained to be said. But if Pakistan was in the wrong, they ought to express their dissent publicly in clear and unequivocal terms.

A few days later an esteemed woman worker and a very dear associate from Sind came and gave a harrowing description of the happenings in Sind. Gandhiji's only comment was, how happier he would have been if instead of her coming to tell him all that, some one had given him the news that she had been killed in protecting the honour of Sindhi sisters! "The news from Sind has made me restless," he wrote in a letter. "I am anxious to visit Sind. But with what face can I go there? To rush forth to put out a conflagration elsewhere when your own house is burning is only to help spread the conflagration. In such circumstances the best way to fight the conflagration elsewhere is to put out the fire in your own house and prevent it from spreading."

"I am in a furnace," he wrote in another letter. "There is a raging fire all around. We are trampling humanity under foot."

His arrears of correspondence had been piling up. This worried him. So he discontinued having a nap after the morning prayer. "This is the only time when I can attend to my post," he wrote in one of his letters. "During the day the non-stop stream of visitors leaves not a moment of free time. I still do not know what the next step is going to be. . . . I am groping for light. I can as yet only catch faint rays of it. When I see its full blaze the *dosti* (friendship) of Delhi will really become *dili* (rooted in heart)."

Similarly, he usually had someone to shave his chin while he lay in his bath-tub and stole a few brief moments of sleep. He gave that up also to be able to dictate replies to letters to his attendant while he

himself applied the razor to his chin. One of the letters dictated by him from his bath-tub ran: "Regard me as bankrupt. Beneath the surface there is a smouldering fire. It may break out into conflagration any moment."

"The peace of the capital of independent India is being protected by the military," he wrote in still another letter, "and with me in the heart of the city as witness. . . . Believers in Ahimsa are depending upon the force of arms. What an irony! What an ordeal for a votary of Ahimsa like me! What can be the mystery of God's will hidden in this?"

But when it was suggested to him that it was time that he gave himself some rest, he brushed aside the suggestion saying what he needed was not rest but deliverance. "It is not the burden of work that weighs upon me. But I find that people come and tell me now one thing, then another. They cannot stick to what they say. They speak one thing in my presence. But as soon as they have passed out of the gate of Birla House, they begin to cast about as to what they shall say before X, Y and Z to win their favour."

While outwardly the situation around him thus continued daily to worsen, it was noticed that a subtle change had been coming over him of late. There were occasional hints of a growing awareness that the cloud of darkness was about to break. On the 10th January, when his friends the Maulanas of Delhi came to him he said to them: "You have waited long enough. Have patience for yet another week and see what happens."

5

To the numerous causes of mounting tension between India and Pakistan was now added another—the issue of Pakistan's share of the cash balances of undivided India. Under the decision of the Partition Council, out of a total cash balance of rupees 375 crores, 20 crores were paid to Pakistan on the day of the transfer of power. The allocation was provisional and subject to readjustment that would have to be made when the balance to be paid to Pakistan was finally determined. This amount was subsequently fixed at rupees 55 crores after a series of conferences between the representatives of the two Dominions in the last week of November. The invasion of Kashmir by the raiders was then in full swing. Besides, there were several other issues, some of them involving financial adjustment between India and Pakistan with the balance heavily in favour of India. Over these Pakistan was still shilly-shallying. The Government of India, in the course of negotiations, made it clear that it would not regard the settlement as final until agreement had been

reached on all outstanding issues, and that no payment would be made until the question of Kashmir was also settled. The Pakistan delegates adroitly soft-pedalled this part of the issue during the negotiations and allowed the Indian representatives to take their silence for consent. But as soon as the agreement on the financial share was recorded, they began to isolate it from other issues. At the same time their attitude on Kashmir stiffened. As a result, the Government of India deferred the payment of the amount. The Finance Minister of Pakistan characterised it as "an act of aggression".[15] The Government of India had a very valid defence against this baseless charge. Apart from the explicit condition subject to which they had agreed to accept Pakistan's share in the cash balance at 55 crores, they were not prepared to provide Pakistan with the sinews of war to be used in its undeclared war against the Indian Union on the Kashmir soil. Pandit Nehru explained the Indian Union's position in a public statement: "A State freezes the credit of the other party in such circumstances. We have not frozen anything in that sense. All that we said was that we accept this agreement but there must be an overall settlement and we shall honour it completely."[16]

On the 6th January, 1948, Gandhiji discussed the question with Lord Mountbatten and asked for his frank and candid opinion on the Government of India's decision. Mountbatten said, it would be the "first dishonourable act" by the Indian Union Government if the payment of the cash balance claimed by Pakistan was withheld. It set Gandhiji furiously thinking. He did not question the legality of the Indian Union's decision. Nor could he insist on the Union Government going beyond what the strict letter of the law required and permitted them. And yet he felt it would be a tragedy if in a world dominated by the cult of expediency and force India that had made history by winning her independence by predominantly non-violent, i.e. moral means, failed in that crisis to live up to her highest ancient tradition that would serve as a shining beacon light to others. For that he would have to transform the overall situation and to create a new moral climate which would make it possible for the Indian Government to go beyond the strict letter of the law.

Some Maulanas of Delhi came to see Gandhiji on the 11th January. They were nationalist Muslims and had refused to go out of India, which they proudly claimed as their motherland. With great doggedness and courage they had continued to stay on in Delhi even through the worst of times. But their patience, they complained to Gandhiji, was now nearly exhausted. One of them said to him: "How long do you expect the Muslims to put up with these pin-pricks? If the Congress cannot guarantee their protection, let them plainly say so. The Muslims will then go away and be at least

spared the daily insults and possible physical violence. For ourselves we cannot even go to Pakistan, for as nationalist Muslims we have been opposed to its formation. On the other hand, Hindus will not allow us to live in the capital. So, we cannot stay in the Indian Union either. Why not arrange a passage for us and send us to England, if you cannot guarantee our safety and self-respect here?"

"You call yourselves nationalist Muslims and you speak like this?" Gandhiji answered reproachfully. But the steely barb had entered into his heart. It was the last straw. "We are steadily losing grip on Delhi," he remarked to a friend. "If Delhi goes, India goes and with that the last hope of world peace."

In the evening at his prayer meeting he made a reference to his talk with the Maulanas. Religion was a personal affair of the individual concerned. Times were bad. In Pakistan Muslims had gone mad and had driven away most of the Hindus and Sikhs. If the Hindus in the Union did likewise, it would spell their own ruin.

On the 12th January in the afternoon, Gandhiji was as usual sitting out on the sun-drenched spacious Birla House lawn. As it was Monday, his day of weekly silence, he was writing out his prayer address. As my sister looked through sheet after sheet that she was to translate and read out to the prayer congregation in the evening, she was dumb-founded. She came running to me with the news—Gandhiji had decided to launch on a fast unto death unless the madness in Delhi ceased.

From the time that he had returned to Delhi, after his Calcutta fast, Gandhiji had never ceased asking himself where his duty lay in the face of what was happening. There was no answer he could give to the Muslims who came to him day after day and week after week with their tales of woe. He was impatient to go to the succour of the minority community in Sind and the West Punjab, and to the Frontier Province to meet the Khan Brothers and their Khudai Khidmatgars, towards whom he felt a special responsibility, especially after partition, apart from the personal bond and the common bond of non-violence that united them. But with what face or self-confidence could he go there when he could not guarantee full protection to the Delhi Muslims? He could not get the authorities to do more, and what they had succeeded in doing was in his eyes not enough. Perhaps, circumstanced as they were, they were not in a position to do more. He felt resourceless and resourcelessness in the face of a moral challenge he could not stand. Out of the depth of his anguish came the decision to fast. It left no room for argument. Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru had been with him only a couple of hours before. He had given then no inkling of what was brewing within him.

The written address containing the decision was read out at the evening prayer meeting. The fast would begin on the next day after

the mid-day meal. There would be no time limit. During the fast he would take only water with or without salt and the juice of sour limes. The fast would be terminated only when and if he was satisfied that there was "a reunion of hearts of all the communities brought about without outside pressure but from an awakened sense of duty." The statement ran:

> One fasts for health's sake under laws governing health, or fasts as a penance for a wrong done and felt as such. In these fasts, the fasting one need not believe in Ahimsa. There is, however, a fast which a votary of non-violence sometimes feels impelled to undertake by way of protest against some wrong done by society and this he does when he as a votary of Ahimsa has no other remedy left. Such an occasion has come my way.
>
> When I returned to Delhi from Calcutta on the 9th September, 1947, gay Delhi looked a city of the dead. At once I saw that I had to be in Delhi and "do or die". There is apparent calm brought about by prompt military and police action. But there is storm within the breast. It may burst forth any day. This I count as no fulfilment of the vow to "do" which alone can keep me from death, the incomparable friend. . . . .
>
> I never like to feel resourceless, a Satyagrahi never should. . . . My impotence has been gnawing at me of late. It will go immediately the fast is undertaken. I have been brooding over it for the last three days. The final conclusion has flashed upon me and it makes me happy. No man, if he is pure, has anything more precious to give than his life. I hope and pray that I have that purity in me to justify the step.

He asked all to bless his effort and to pray for him and with him. The issue was nothing less than "the regaining of India's dwindling prestige and her fast fading sovereignty over the heart of Asia and therethrough the world." The statement continued:

> I flatter myself with the belief that the loss of her soul by India will mean the loss of the hope of the aching, storm-tossed and hungry world. Let no friend, or foe if there be one, be angry with me. There are friends who do not believe in the method of the fast for the reclamation of the human mind. They will bear with me and extend to me the same liberty of action that they claim for themselves. With God as my supreme and sole counsellor, I felt that I must take the decision without any other adviser. If I have made a mistake and discover it, I shall have no hesitation in proclaiming it from the house-top and retracing my faulty step. There is little chance of my making

such a discovery. . . . I plead for all absence of argument and inevitable endorsement of the step. If the whole of India responds or at least Delhi does, the fast might be soon ended.

But whether it ends soon or late or never, let there be no softness in dealing with what may be termed as a crisis. . . . A pure fast, like duty, is its own reward. I do not embark upon it for the sake of the result it may bring. I do so because I must. Hence I urge everybody dispassionately to examine the purpose and let me die, if I must, in peace which I hope is ensured. Death for me would be a glorious deliverance rather than that I should be a helpless witness of the destruction of India, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. That destruction is certain if Pakistan ensures no equality of status and security of life and property for all professing the various faiths of the world and if India copies her. Only then Islam dies in the two Indias, not in the world. But Hinduism and Sikhism have no world outside India.

The statement concluded with an entreaty and an appeal: "Those who differ from me will be honoured by me for their resistance however implacable. Let my fast quicken conscience, not deaden it. Just contemplate the rot that has set in beloved India and you will rejoice to think that there is an humble son of hers who is strong enough and possibly pure enough to take the happy step. If he is neither, he is a burden on earth. The sooner he disappears and clears the Indian atmosphere of the burden the better for him and all concerned."

In reply to a question as to why he should have decided to launch on a fast at that juncture when "nothing extraordinary had happened", he answered that "death by inches" was far worse than sudden death. "It would have been foolish for me to wait till the last Muslim has been turned out of Delhi by subtle undemonstrative methods."[17] Could Suhrawardy freely move about in the city? He could not. "I cannot today ask him to accompany me to prayer meetings lest someone should insult him. . . . All this has to go before I can be at peace with myself."[18]

After the prayer meeting, as soon as his weekly silence was over, Gandhiji paid a visit to Lord Mountbatten and returned from there after one hour at half-past seven. Lord Mountbatten had no difficulty in accepting the decision. He had not the slightest doubt that nothing but good would come out of it. If things in India were set right as a result of the fast, improvement in Pakistan would automatically follow.

Devadas, Gandhiji's youngest son, made a thirteenth-hour attempt to dissuade him from the grave decision. Like everybody else, he had no inkling of what was coming. He learnt of the fast only

after the decision had been announced. The next morning he sent his father a note which he had written late at night. The note ran: "My chief concern and my argument against your fast is that you have surrendered to impatience, whereas your mission by its very nature calls for infinite patience. You do not seem to have realised what a tremendous success your patient labour has achieved. It has saved . . . thousands of lives and may still save many more. . . . By your death you will not be able to accomplish what you can by living. I would, therefore, beseech you to pay heed to my entreaty and give up your decision to fast."

This evoked from Gandhiji a reply that will live as an epic of faith. He did not agree that his decision to fast was hasty. "It was quick no doubt, so far as the drafting of the statement was concerned. Behind this lightning quickness was my four days' heart-churning and prayer. It cannot therefore be called 'hasty' according to my definition, or for that matter the definition of anybody who knows. In a statement like this, there is always room for improving the language. It took me, therefore, no time to accept the verbal changes you had suggested. As for the propriety of the decision itself I did not feel called upon to consult you or anybody else. The fact that I did listen to you all only bespeaks my patience and humility. . . . Your worry as well as your pleading are equally vain. . . . You are of course a friend and a friend of a very high order at that. But you cannot get over the son in you. Your concern is natural and I respect it. But your argument betrays impatience and superficial thinking. . . . I regard this step of mine as the acme of patience. Is patience which kills its very object patience or folly? I cannot accept the credit for what has been achieved since my arrival in Delhi. It would be sheer conceit on my part to do so. How can any mortal say with assurance that so many lives were saved as a result of his or anyone's labours? God alone could do that. And does it not betray sheer ignorance to attribute sudden loss of patience to one who has been patience personified since September last?

"It was only when in terms of human effort I had exhausted all resources and realised my utter helplessness that I laid my head on God's lap. That is the inner meaning and significance of my fast. You would do well to read and ponder over *Gajendra Moksha*—the greatest of devotional poems as I have called it.[19] Then alone, perhaps, you will be able to appreciate the step I have taken. Your last sentence is a charming token of your affection. But your affection is rooted in attachment or delusion. Attachment does not become enlightenment because it relates to a public cause. So long as one has not shed all attachment and learnt to regard both life and death as same, it would be idle to pretend that he wants to live only because his life is indispensable for a certain cause.

'Strive while you live' is a beautiful saying, but there is a hiatus in it. Striving has to be in the spirit of detachment. Now perhaps you will understand why I cannot comply with your request. God sent this fast. He alone will end it, if and when He wills. In the meantime it behoves you, me and everybody to have faith that it is equally well whether He preserves my life or ends it, and to act accordingly. I can therefore, only pray that He may lend strength to my spirit lest the desire to live may tempt me into premature termination of my fast."

The fast commenced at 11.55 a.m. on the 13th January with the singing of Gandhiji's favourite hymn *Vaishnava Jana*, and "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" sung by Sushila, followed by Ramadhun. Only a few intimate friends and members of the household were present. The company was impromptu.

With the launching of the fast, Gandhiji passed from tumult into peace. Those who had watched him closely since his return to the City of the Dead in September testified that never had he appeared so cheerful and care-free as immediately after the commencement of his fast.

Previously it had been Gandhiji's practice on the commencement of a fast to ask everybody to return to his post of duty. But I had come to the conclusion, specially after my experience of Gandhiji's Calcutta fast in September, 1947, that in a crisis like the present one, I could make myself more useful, even in terms of my assignment in Noakhali, by being with him. To my agreeable surprise as soon as he had commenced his fast, Gandhiji called me to him and said: "I want you to be here and look after *Harijan* during my fast." My name had continued to appear as editor of *Harijan* even after I had ceased to write for it since Gandhiji had disengaged himself and us all from all activities not directly connected with our mission in Noakhali. I told Gandhiji that I had already decided to stay and not to go away even if I had to offer Satyagraha. At this he smiled and nodded approval, and so I stayed on. Looking at it now in the light of subsequent events, I can only regard this as a manifestation of God's grace which irrespective of deserts gives to everybody according to his faith.

During one of his previous fasts when Gandhiji was staying in the house of the Ali Brothers, his Muslim colleagues, they asked him if it was not "a breach of loyalty" to his colleagues to launch on a twenty-one days' fast without consulting them. Pat came Gandhiji's reply: "Have we not all pledged our loyalty to God? How can I then be guilty of disloyalty to anyone by keeping my covenant with God?" This time friends knew better. Neither Sardar Patel nor Pandit Nehru tried to strive with him though the Sardar was very much upset. A believer in deeds more than

words, he simply sent word that he would do anything that Gandhiji might wish. In reply Gandhiji suggested that the first priority should be given to the question of Pakistan's share of the cash assets.

"Brave deeds and not vain laments should be our motto," said Gandhiji to a sister who came to seek his guidance soon after the commencement of the fast. A Sikh friend asked whom he regarded as responsible for his fast? Gandhiji replied, he blamed no individual or community in particular. But he did hold that if the Hindus and Sikhs insisted on turning out the Muslims from Delhi, they would be betraying India and their own faith. His was an "all-in fast", directed against nobody in particular and yet addressed to the conscience of all. It excluded nobody, "not even the majority community in the other Dominion. If all groups or even one of them respond fully, I know the miracle will be achieved. For instance, if the Sikhs respond to my appeal as one man, I shall be wholly satisfied. I shall then go and live in their midst in the Punjab. I know they are a brave people and can set an example in the non-violence of the brave which will blaze the path for all the rest."

Describing his fast as "my greatest fast" in a letter to Mirabehn dated 16th January, he wrote: "Whether it will ultimately prove so or not is neither your concern nor mine. Our concern is the act itself and not the result of action."

A Muslim friend entreated Gandhiji to give up the fast "for the sake of us Muslims. You are our only hope and support," he pleaded. "The Muslims are not innocent. Have not the Hindus and Sikhs too suffered beyond words?" "I know that," Gandhiji replied. "That is the very reason why I am fasting. I shall become a broken reed and be lost to both Hindus and Muslims, like salt that hath lost its savour, if in this hour of test, I fail to live up to my creed and their expectations."

Sheikh Abdullah, the Prime Minister of Kashmir, with Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, the Deputy Prime Minister, had come down to Delhi. They, like the rest, requested Gandhiji to end his fast "if only for the sake of Kashmir. Kashmir needs you now more than ever." They said they would not return to Kashmir till he complied with their request. Gandhiji told them that his fast was intended to cover Kashmir also.

Maulana Azad had always shown an uncanny insight into Gandhiji's mind. He intervened and said: "Even if we were to dash our heads against a stone wall, his resolve once taken won't be given up. To argue further with him is only to prolong his agony. The only thing for us is to begin thinking what we can do to fulfil his conditions which alone will induce him to give up his fast." And so they all set about to tackle the problem constructively.

A deputation of Hindu and Sikh refugees came next. Gandhiji told them that it was in their hands to terminate his fast. "There should be

a thorough cleansing of the hearts. You should be able to give the assurance that even if the whole of India goes up in a blaze, Delhi will be safe. If you do not pay heed to my words now you will all weep and wring your hands in sorrow afterwards."

Some of us had received an invitation from Lord and Lady Mountbatten to a reception at the Government House on the day Gandhiji began his fast. None of us felt like going. I asked Gandhiji whether we might not excuse ourselves from attendance. But he insisted that all those who had been invited should attend as a matter of duty. "Mountbatten will probably want to discuss the fast with you," he said to me. "It would be worth while getting his reaction at first hand. In any case, you will be able to report whether any drinks were served at the function!" Just as Gandhiji had anticipated, Mountbatten opened conversation on the question of the fast as soon as we met at the party. With me were my sister and Brijkrishna Chandiwala. Mountbatten said: "I have only one criticism to make in regard to his fast. He should have discussed it first with Pandit Nehru."

A shocking report had appeared in the Press that day. A train bringing Hindu and Sikh refugees from the North-West Frontier Province had been attacked at Gujrat railway station in the West Punjab. A large number of passengers had been massacred and women abducted. Referring to it, Mountbatten remarked: "It makes Mr. Gandhi's task more difficult. But his victory will be all the greater for it."

I was again struck by his innate courage and boldness of his imagination. When I reported this to Gandhiji, he was delighted. "Have I not often said," he remarked, "that one must be a great warrior fully to appreciate the power that is non-violence?" And he repeated the Gujarati poet Pritam's celebrated line: "The path of the Lord is for heroes, not for cowards."

At the evening prayer meeting Gandhiji declared that he would break his fast only when conditions in Delhi permitted the withdrawal of the military and the police without any danger to peace. The police might remain but only to cope with anti-social elements, not for enforcing communal peace.

Some people had complained that the Mahatma had sympathy for the Muslims only and had undertaken the fast for their sake. Gandhiji answered that in a sense they were right. All his life he had stood, as everyone should stand, for minorities or those in need. Pakistan had resulted in depriving the Muslims of the Union of their pride and self-confidence. It hurt him to think that this should be so. It weakened the foundations of a State to have any class of people lose self-confidence. His fast was against the Muslims, too, in the sense that it should enable them to stand up to their Hindu and Sikh brethren. In terms of his fast, therefore, Muslim friends had to exert themselves no less than the Hindus

and the Sikhs. He wanted a thorough, all-round cleansing of hearts as a result of his fast. They must dethrone Satan from their hearts and reinstate God. He could not break the fast for less. It did not matter how long it took for real peace to be established. No-one should say or do anything to lure him into giving up his fast prematurely. The object should not be to save his life but to save India and her honour.

Though he had ceased to belong to any part of the country in an exclusive sense, Gujarat, his home province, had never ceased to be mistress of his heart. As a Gujarati of Gujaratis Gandhiji had a special claim upon them. They, whom he had given of his best, had to represent the best that was in Gujarat and give to their common motherland their best. Had not Gujarat nearly three decades ago taken the lead which had launched India into the non-cooperation and finally independence era? In the supreme crisis that was now upon him, his thoughts naturally turned to the men and women of Gujarat. On the second day of the fast, he sent them a message in the form of an open letter, "To the People of Gujarat". Though addressed primarily to Gujaratis, it was intended through them to speak to all the people of India:

> Though twenty-four hours have not been completed since the fast commenced . . . it is the last day of posting for this week's *Harijan*. Hence I have decided to address a few words in Gujarati to the people of Gujarat.
>
> I do not regard this as an ordinary fast. . . . It has sprung not from any reasoning but God's will that rules men's reason. . . . Behind it is the realisation that there is a time for every thing, and an opportunity once missed never returns. . . .
>
> Delhi is the metropolis of India. If, therefore, we really in our hearts do not subscribe to the two-nation theory, in other words, if we do not regard the Hindus and the Muslims as constituting two distinct nations, we shall have to admit that the picture that Delhi presents today is not what we have envisaged always of the capital of India. Delhi is the Eternal City, as the ruins of its precursors—Indraprastha and Hastinapur—testify. It is the heart of India. . . . From Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin) to Kashmir and from Karachi to Dibrugarh in Assam, all Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Jews who people this vast sub-continent and have adopted it as their dear motherland, have an equal right to it. No-one can say that it belongs to the majority community only and that the minority community can only remain there as the underdog. Whoever serves it with the purest devotion must have the first claim. Therefore, anyone who wants to drive out of Delhi all Musalmans as such must be set down as its enemy Number One and therefore enemy Number One of India. We are rushing towards that catastrophe. It is the bounden duty of every

son and daughter of India to take his or her full share in averting it.

What shall we do then? If we would see our dream of Panchayat Raj, i.e. true democracy realised, we would regard the humblest and lowest Indian as being equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the land. This presupposes that all are pure or will become pure if they are not. And purity must go hand in hand with wisdom. No-one would then harbour any distinction between community and community, caste and out-caste. Everybody would regard all as equal with him and hold them together in the silken net of love. No-one would regard another as untouchable. We would hold as equal the toiling labourer and the rich capitalist. Everybody would know how to earn an honest living by the sweat of his brow and make no distinction between intellectual and physical labour. To hasten this consummation, we would voluntarily turn ourselves into scavengers. No-one who has wisdom will ever touch opium, liquor or any intoxicants. Everybody would observe Swadeshi as the rule of life and regard every woman, not being his wife, as his mother, sister or daughter, according to her age, never lust after her in his heart. He would be ready to lay down his life when occasion demanded it, never want to take another's life. . . . Needless to say, such a son of India will not want to be told what his duty in the present hour is.[20]

When the Delhi Maulanas came to see him in the course of the day Gandhiji greeted them with, "Are you now satisfied?" Then, turning to the one who had said to him three days ago that he should get the Union Government to send them to England, he remarked: "I had no answer to give you then. I can now face you. Shall I ask the Government to arrange a passage for you to England? I shall say to them: Here are the unfaithful Muslims who want to desert India. Give them the facility they want."

The Maulana said he felt sorry if his words had hurt him. Gandhiji retorted with urbane banter: "That would be like the Englishman who kicks you and at the same time goes on saying, 'I beg your pardon'!" Becoming serious, he proceeded: "Do you not feel ashamed of asking to be sent to England? And then you said that slavery under British rule was better than independence under the Union of India. How dare you, who claim to be patriots and nationalists, utter such words? You have to cleanse your hearts and learn to be cent per cent. truthful. Otherwise India will not tolerate you for long and even I shall not be able to help you."

At the evening prayer meeting, he spoke about the cold-blooded attack on the refugee train at Gujrat, and the pogroms against the Hindus and Sikhs at Karachi. A new note of confidence and strength

rang through his speech. "How long can the Union put up with such things? How long can I bank upon the patience of the Hindus and Sikhs in spite of my fast? Pakistan has to put a stop to this state of affairs. They must pledge themselves that they will not rest till the Hindus and Sikhs can return and live in safety in Pakistan."

He drew a glowing picture of what would happen if there was a wave of self-purification all over India. "Pakistan will become *pak* (pure) . . . past things will have been forgotten, past distinctions will have been buried, the least and the smallest in Pakistan will command the same respect and the same protection of life and property as the Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah enjoys. Such Pakistan can never die. *Then and not till then shall I repent that I ever called it a sin, as I am afraid I must hold today, it is.* I want to live to see the Pakistan not on paper, not in the orations of Pakistani orators, but in the daily life of every Pakistani Muslim. Then the inhabitants of the Union will forget that there ever was any enmity between them and if I am not mistaken, the Union will proudly copy Pakistan and if I am alive I shall ask her to excel Pakistan in well-doing. The fast is a bid for nothing less." He admitted that to India's shame there were some in the Union who "readily copied Pakistan's bad manners."

> Before I ever knew anything of politics in my early youth, I dreamt the dream of communal unity of the heart. I shall jump in the evening of my life, like a child, to feel that the dream has been realised in this life. . . . Who would not risk sacrificing his life for the realisation of such a dream? Then we shall have real Swaraj. Then though legally and geographically we may still be two States, in daily life no-one will think that we are separate States. The vista before me seems to me to be, as it must be to you, too glorious to be true. Yet like a child in a famous picture, drawn by a famous painter, I shall not be happy till I have got it. . . . I remember to have read . . . in the Delhi Fort . . . when I visited it in 1896, a verse on one of the gates which when translated reads: "If there is paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here." That Fort with all its magnificence at its best, was no paradise in my estimation. But I should love to see that verse with justice inscribed on the gates of Pakistan at all the entrances.

After giving an ecstatic pen-picture of the paradise that he wanted Pakistan to be, a paradise in which there would be no rich, no poor, no master, no slave, all would be "bread-labourers", striving strenuously to realise the ideals of equality, fraternity and purity, he concluded:

> I hope every one who listens to me or reads these lines will forgive me if stretched on my bed and basking in the sun, drinking

life-giving sunshine, I allow myself to indulge in this ecstacy. Let this assure the doubters and sceptics that I have not the slightest desire that the fast should be ended as quickly as possible. It matters little if the ecstatic wishes of a fool like me are never realised and the fast never broken. I am content to wait as long as it may be necessary, but it will hurt me to think that people have acted merely in order to save my life. I claim that God has inspired this fast. . . . No human agency has ever been known to thwart nor will it ever thwart Divine Will.

6

Within twenty-four hours of the commencement of the fast, the Cabinet of the Indian Union met on the lawn of Birla House round Gandhiji's fasting bed to consider afresh the issue of Pakistan's share of the cash balances. But it made those who were already angry with Gandhiji for what they considered as his partiality towards the Muslims angrier still. A fanatical group among them began to organise a dark conspiracy to compass his death.

At night some Sikhs from the West Punjab held a demonstration in front of Birla House, shouting, "Blood for Blood", "We want revenge", "Let Gandhi die". Pandit Nehru had just boarded his car to leave Birla House after meeting Gandhiji. On hearing the shouts he got down from his car and rushed out. "Who dares to shout 'Let Gandhi die'?" he roared. "Let him who dares repeat those words in my presence. He will have to kill me first." The demonstrators scurried away helter-skelter.

Inside his darkened room, Gandhiji lay in his bed. Hearing the noise outside, he asked: "What are they shouting?"

"They are shouting, 'Let Gandhi die.' "

"How many are they?"

"Not many."

With a sigh he began taking Ramanama.

"Bapu, during your Calcutta fast you were very cheerful and even cracked jokes with us, you look very grave now," someone remarked. Gandhiji replied: "Yes, it was comparatively easy-going in Calcutta. The task here is far more difficult. There was no refugee problem there to complicate the issue."

The news about Gandhiji's fast set up a deep heart searching among all sections. Leaders not only in India but also in Pakistan began to ask themselves what had led Gandhiji to take such an extreme step, whether by indulging in senseless vendetta, they were not really ill-serving their religion and driving their respective countries to suicide. It steadied the waverers and lent courage and strength

to those who from sluggishess or timidity had hitherto indecisively hung back, instead of coming out fearlessly and openly to denounce the misdeeds of their co-religionists. This applied particularly to the Indian Muslims.

A stream of messages of sympathy and support poured in from Muslim leaders and Muslim organisations all over India and even from abroad. There were telegrams from the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawabs of Rampur and Bhopal. The President of the Bombay Provincial Muslim League, in a statement, characterised Gandhiji's fast as "a challenge to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs . . . to save. . . Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism." He appealed to all to contribute their mite in restoring peace for the sake of "our country and religion". A message from the Director of the Islamic Press, London, ran: "Your momentous action to save India and Pakistan from plunging into fratricidal war is appreciated by humanity all over the world. I pray to Allah that you will succeed in changing the minds of the leaders and peoples. May you live long." Dr. Zakir Husain, the chief of the Muslim National University, Delhi, who had narrowly escaped being lynched during the disturbances in the Punjab, wrote:

> We have no doubt that you are guided by a superior wisdom, and that you have chosen the right moment to urge your people to purify their hearts. God has given you a strength and a confidence which does not fail and a faith that adverse circumstances cannot shake. God is with you and you must succeed. Only we are overwhelmed with shame that free India should have nothing to offer you but bitterness and distress. . . . May God . . . spare you to lead us onward towards the higher freedom for which you have been striving, and of which, in spite of all our blindness and misdeeds you still believe us worthy. If anything can transform us, it is your faith that the highest in us must and will assert itself.

Of particular significance was an injunction by a Muslim divine from Bareilly to his followers: "There is no greater friend of Musalmans than you, whether in Pakistan or Hindustan. . . . My heart bleeds with yours at recent Karachi and Gujrat (Pakistan) atrocities, the massacre of innocent men, women and children, forcible conversion and the abduction of women. These are crimes against Allah for which there is no pardon. Let the Pakistan Government know that. Much less can an Islamic State be founded upon such heinous crimes against Allah's creation. I order my followers in Pakistan and appeal to the Pakistan Muslims and Government to put an end to these shameful, un-Islamic misdeeds and express unqualified repentance. My order to my followers and to the Muslims of Hindustan is

. . . (that) they must remain loyal to you and to the Union Government to the last . . . condemn the misdeeds of their co-religionists in Pakistan in unambiguous and emphatic terms to create public abhorrence against such action. . . . It is high time that Musalmans should realise that their sincere loyalty to the Union and their leaders' confidence in themselves are the only safeguards that can protect them. The secret desire to look to Pakistan for guidance and help will be their doom. Pray break your fast and save Hindustan and Pakistan from ruin, disaster and death."

Ever since the Great Calcutta Killing of August, 1946, Gandhiji had been telling Muslims that if they continued to sit on the fence instead of courageously denouncing the excesses of their co-religionists and failed to align themselves with the victims of the same even at the risk of their lives, or if they harboured secret sympathy with the perpetrators of those excesses, it would bring down upon them the wrath of those with whom—Pakistan or no Pakistan—the bulk of them must live. But his warning had largely fallen upon unheeding ears with the unfortunate result that the Indian Muslims, having allowed the proverbial wind to be sown, were now faced with the prospect of having to reap the whirlwind. At the commencement of his fast he had told a group of Maulanas, who came to request him to reverse his decision, that if happenings like the recent massacre of the Hindu and Sikh refugees on the train at Gujrat continued unchecked, not to speak of himself, "even ten Gandhis would not be able to save the Indian Muslims." The statement from Bareilly was therefore a very welcome portent of a change which all his efforts before the fast had failed to achieve. He reinforced that appeal in the course of his prayer address at evening with a few straight words of his own. "It is impossible to save the lives of the Muslims in the Union," he warned, "if the Muslim majority in Pakistan do not behave as decent men and women."[21]

The response of Pakistan to Gandhiji's fast exceeded everybody's expectation. In the twinkling of an eye, the Muslim League's enemy Number One of pre-partition days was transfigured into their "greatest friend", and became the object of their anxious concern. The first indication of it was a wire from the indefatigable Mridula Sarabhai. She had been engaging in God's good work of rescue and recovery of abducted women. Her wire to Gandhiji from Lahore ran: "Everybody here wants to know what they can do to save Gandhiji's life." Prayers were offered both in India and Pakistan—prayers in public, prayers in private, prayers by Muslim women in the seclusion of their *purda*—that God might spare him.

Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, the Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation in the Pakistan Government, and a noted protagonist of the

Muslim League's "direct action" (see Vol. I, page 283) in a Press interview declared: "The appalling degradation of . . . morale which has manifested itself in both India and Pakistan during recent months called for a drastic remedy and Mahatma Gandhi has lodged his protest against these conditions in the extreme form. . . . If the present state of affairs lasts, our hard-won freedom is bound to come to an inglorious end."

Moving references to Gandhiji's fast were made in the course of their speeches by the members on the floor of the West Punjab (Pakistan) Assembly. "No country in the world has produced a greater man, religious founders apart, than Mahatma Gandhi," remarked Malik Feroz Khan Noon of "outdoing Chengiz Khan and Halaku" fame (see Vol. I, page 254). Mian Mumtaz Khan Daulatana, the Finance Minister, said that it was their foremost duty to appreciate "the feelings which Mahatma Gandhi's fast reveals towards the Muslims. This shows that there is at least one man in India who is ready to sacrifice even his life for Hindu-Muslim unity. . . . I assure Mahatma Gandhi from the floor of this House that his feelings for the protection of minorities are fully shared by us." The Chief Minister, the Khan of Mamdot, speaking on his own and his colleagues' behalf expressed "deep admiration and sincere appreciation with great feeling of concern for Mahatma Gandhi's great gesture for the furtherance of a noble cause", and added that "no efforts will be spared in this Province to help in saving his precious life."

* * *

On the third day of his fast (15th January) Gandhiji felt distinctly weaker and had to be taken to his bathroom in a chair. A medical bulletin issued over the signature of three doctors in the evening ran: "He is naturally losing weight, the weakness has increased. The voice is feeble. Acetone bodies have appeared in the urine." This meant, the bulletin went on to explain, that the disintergration of the body-tissue as a result of fasting had begun to fill the blood stream with toxins. He had entered what in medical language they call the "danger zone". An alarming symptom was that although he was still able to take hot water freely, it was not being eliminated, the output being 28 ounces only against an input of 68 ounces. In other words, the kidney was failing. In spite of it he could crack jokes about his fast. In a letter to Mirabehn he wrote:

> I am taking my meal such as a fasting man with prescribed food can take. Don't be shocked. The food consists of 8 ounces of hot water sipped with difficulty. You sip it as poison, well knowing that in result it is nectar. It revives me whenever I take

it. Strange to say, this time I am able to take about 8 meals of this poison-tasting but nectar-like meal. Yet I claim to be fasting and credulous people accept it! What a strange world!

The letter concluded: "Don't rush here because I am fasting. the *yajna*, as I have called it, demands that everyone, wherever he or she is, should perform his or her duty. If an appreciable number do this, I must survive the ordeal. Trust God and be where you are."

He was too weak to walk to the prayer ground in the evening. A microphone was consequently brought to him into his room and placed alongside his bed so that he could speak directly into it from where he was. After the prayer there was a clamour for his *darshan*. His cot was, therefore, taken out on the verandah from where he could be seen by the people outside. One could have heard a pin drop as the crowd filed past in reverential silence in front of his room where he lay on his cot heavily swathed in his white woollen shawls, hands folded in *namaskar* and the sad, pensive face, shrunken and furrowed, but serene and unperturbed.

As soon as the people had got over the first shock, they woke up to a full sense of their responsibility and set about organising an all-out campaign to bring about a real change of heart. Numerous deputations of Hindus and Muslims and other groups came and assured Gandhiji that they would thereafter dedicate themselves to the building up of communal harmony. A deputation of refugees from the Frontier Province told him that though they had suffered terribly, they would bear no ill-will against the Muslims and would do everything in their power to be good friends and neighbours to them. Addressing a rally of some ten thousand people—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs—Pandit Nehru said: "The loss of Mahatma Gandhi's life would mean the loss of India's soul, because he is the embodiment of India's spiritual power. . . . Like a prophet, he has realised that communal fighting if not checked immediately, would bring about the end of freedom." A procession of Sikh volunteers paraded the main streets of the city, shouting slogans of communal harmony and appealing to the people to maintain peace for the sake of the Father of the Nation.

In one of his prayer addresses, Gandhiji had said something about the Muslim League being responsible for much that had happened in both parts of India. It brought from Shuaib Qureshi, a close friend of Gandhiji, a letter of protest. But Gandhiji felt that he had now earned the right to call a spade a spade and to administer wholesome advice, no matter how unpalatable it was to all Muslims and even to Pakistan, without the risk of being misunderstood. He asked me to write to Shuaib that he was unrepentant for what he had said about the Muslim League's responsibility for the

existing state of affairs: "I cannot in all honesty absolve it. Nor must I in this crisis mince words or keep back things which might displease others. Say further, that those who cannot appreciate this side of my nature cannot well associate themselves with the prayer for the successful termination of my fast. It is the privilege of friendship to speak out the truth even though it might sound unpleasant to the ear, in the hope that genuine friendship will survive all jars."

Gandhiji was equally outspoken with those who were trying to make capital out of his fast to run down Sardar Patel. Sardar Patel, as the Minister for Home Affairs, had incurred the unpopularity of a large section of the Muslims. Some even dubbed him as an enemy of the Muslims and Pakistan. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Sardar did give the first place to the security of the country. There he took no risks. But he firmly held, too, that such Muslims as chose to remain in India and regarded it as their home must get a fair and square deal. The fact of the matter was that he never really bothered much about either abstract philosophy or formal religion. He was a typically matter-of-fact peasant soul too big to be merely anti-anybody. But he was very strongly anti-humbug and those who used religion to cover ulterior ends got short shift from him. Unlike Gandhiji he did not suffer fools or fanatics gladly, and as an administrator he never forgot, though he was ever ready to forgive if there was genuine repentance and a firm guarantee of future good behaviour. He was a hard hitter, a straight-from-the-shoulder man. But he was a sport. He had nothing but contempt for back-biters, snivellers and whiners. When those who were beaten at their own game, afterwards went to Gandhiji with a look of martyred innocence, and in hyperbolic language invoked principles which they had themselves never bothered to observe, the Sardar seared them with the shafts of his sarcasm, which sometimes brought an embarrassed smile even on the Mahatma's sad, suffering face. There had been a growing divergence of opinion, no doubt, between the Sardar and Gandhiji on matters of policy. Yet there was hardly anybody with greater personal affection and regard for Gandhiji than he. Regarded at one time as Gandhiji's "yesman", he was so no longer. A malicious whisper began to go the round of New Delhi's clearing houses of political scandal that Gandhiji's fast was intended to bring about a change of heart in the Sardar and constituted a condemnation of the policy of the Home Ministry. Hitherto Gandhiji had listened to the propaganda against the Sardar with a degree of suppressed pain. The fast freed him from that self-imposed restraint. Sycophancy, or praise of himself at the expense of another, especially that of an opponent he could not suffer. In the course of written answers to questions by some pressmen, he told the Sardar's revilers that they were as wrong in isolating the Sardar and making a scapegoat of

him as they were in showering gratuitous praise on Pandit Nehru and himself. Neither he nor Pandit Nehru had any use for such praise. "I know the Sardar. The Sardar has a sharp tongue and a bluntness of speech which sometimes unintentionally hurts but those who know him soon learn to like him all the better for it." The Sardar's method and manner of approach to the Hindu-Muslim question, as also to several other questions, was different from his and Pandit Nehru's, he remarked. But it was a travesty of truth to describe it as "anti-Muslim". The Sardar's heart was expansive enough to accommodate all.

He freely admitted that the Sardar was no longer his "yesman"; he was "too masterful" to be anybody's "yesman". When the Sardar had permitted himself to be called his "yesman", it was because whatever he (Gandhiji) said instinctively appealed to him. "Great as he was in his own field and a very able administrator, he was humble enough to begin his political education under me because, as he explained to me, he could not take to the kind of politics that was in vogue at the time when I began my public career in India. When power descended on him, he saw that he could no longer successfully apply the method of non-violence which he used to wield with signal success. I (on my part) have made the discovery that what I and the people with me had termed non-violence was not the genuine article but a weak copy known as passive resistance. *Naturally, passive resistance can be of no avail to a ruler.* Imagine a weak ruler being able to represent any people. He would only degrade his masters who, for the time being, had placed themselves under his trust. I know that the Sardar could never betray or degrade his trust."[22] Gandhiji went on to say:

> I wonder if with a knowledge of this background to my statement anybody would dare call my fast a condemnation of the policy of the Home Ministry. If there is any such person, I can only tell him that he would degrade and hurt himself. . . . My fast, as I have stated in plain language, is undoubtedly on behalf of the Muslim minority in the Union, and therefore it is necessarily against the Hindus and the Sikhs of the Union and the Muslims of Pakistan. It is also on behalf of the minorities in Pakistan as of the Muslim minority in the Union.
>
> This is a clumsy compression of the idea I have already explained. I cannot expect the fast taken by a very imperfect and weak mortal, as I truely confess I am, to have the potency to make its proteges proof against all danger. The fast is a process of self-purification for all. It would be wrong to make any insinuation against the purity of the step.

The Sardar was reported to have said that Muslim Leaguers

could not become friends overnight. This was adduced as a proof of his anti-Muslim bias. Making a pointed reference to it Gandhiji observed that most Hindus held that view. It was for the Muslim League friends to "live down the Sardar's remark and by their conduct and not (mere) declarations, disprove it."

Gandhiji's fast had come on the eve of the meeting of the United Nations Security Council that was to discuss the Kashmir issue. Gandhiji was asked whether his fast would not have the effect of overshadowing the Gujrat refugee train massacre and the Karachi riots in which large number of Sikhs had been done to death. The representatives of Pakistan would not be worth their reputation, it was put to him, if they did not seize the opportunity to prejudice India's case in the eyes of the United Nations. Gandhiji answered that he had rehearsed to himself that possibility but he was not in the habit of allowing himself to be deflected from the pursuit of truth by such considerations. His fast was intended to embrace and purify even the United Nations Organisation. His fast was to be global in its scope. "For all I have known of the Powers and people outside India, I make bold to say that the fast has created only a healthy impression. Outsiders who are able to take an impartial and unbiassed view of what is happening in India cannot distort the purpose of the fast. . . . The United Nations know that my fast aids them to come to a right decision and to give the right guidance to the newly-made two Dominions."[23]

On the third day of Gandhiji's fast, the Government of India in a communique announced that it had decided to pay Pakistan immediately the sum of rupees 55 crores. While justifying "on legal and other grounds" the position they had taken up before, they challenged the arguments advanced by the Pakistan Government as being contrary to facts. The communique went on to say:

> The Government have shared the world-wide anxiety over the fast undertaken by . . . the Father of the Nation. In common with him they have anxiously searched for ways and means to bury the hatchet of ill-will, prejudice and suspicion, which has poisoned the relations of India and Pakistan. Impelled by the earnest desire to help in every way open to them in the object which Gandhiji has at heart, the Government have sought for some tangible and striking contribution to the movement for ending the physical suffering of the Nation's soul and to turn the nation's mind from the present distemper, bitterness and suspicion to constructive and creative effort. The Government are anxious to remove as far as possible, without detriment to the national good, every cause which leads to friction between India and Pakistan.

Characterising the Union Government's decision as a "unique action" Gandhiji, in a written statement that was read out at the prayer meeting next evening, observed: "The Government of India's decision has put the Pakistan Government on its honour. It ought to lead to an honourable settlement not only of the Kashmir question, but of all the differences between the two Dominions. Friendship should replace the present enmity."

"It is never a light matter for any responsible Cabinet," he went on to observe, "to alter a deliberate, settled policy. Yet our Cabinet, responsible in every sense of the term, has with equal deliberation yet promptness unsettled their settled fact. . . . I know that all the nations of the earth will proclaim this gesture as one which only a large-hearted Cabinet like ours could rise to." This was no policy of appeasement of the Muslims. It was a policy, if they liked, of "self-appeasement". "No Cabinet worthy of being representative of a large mass of mankind can afford to take any step merely because it is likely to win the hasty applause of an unthinking public. In the midst of insanity, should not our best representatives retain sanity and bravely prevent a wreck of the ship of State under their care?"

What then was the motive behind the Union Government's decision? he asked. "It was my fast. It changed the whole outlook. Without the fast, they could not go beyond what the law permitted and required them to do. . . . There is a homely maxim of law which has been in practice for centuries in England that when common law seems to fail, equity comes to the rescue. Not long ago there were even separate courts for the administration of law and equity. Considered in this setting, there is no room for questioning the utter justice of this act of the Union Government."

But so far as the question of the breaking of the fast was concerned, he was still adamant. The doctors felt deeply worried over the failing kidney function. They dreaded not so much an instantaneous collapse as permanent after-effects of any further prolongation. But he had not, Gandhiji told them, embarked upon his fast after consultation with medical men. "My sole guide, even dictator was God, the Infallible and Omnipotent. . . . If He has any further use for this frail body of mine He will keep it in spite of the forebodings of medical men and women. I am in His hands. Therefore . . . I dread neither death nor permanent injury. . . . But I do feel that the warning of the medical friends should—if the country has any use for me—hurry the people to close their ranks. Like brave men and women that we ought to be under hard-won freedom, we should trust even those whom we may suspect to be our enemies. Brave people disdain distrust." This last was in answer to the fears of those who were opposed to the release of rupees 55 crores to Pakistan lest it should be used to sustain the military aggression against

Kashmir. It was true, Pakistan's exchequer was at that time depleted and the 55 crores could provide Pakistan with the sinews of war temporarily in the battle for Kashmir, but Gandhiji had not a shadow of doubt that in the balance India would gain by it. "This was the only issue they could exploit," he remarked to a friend in a conversation a couple of days later. "The Union Government's decision will raise India's prestige in the world as nothing else."

Gandhiji concluded his prayer address on the 15th of January with the declaration that the letter of his vow would be satisfied if the Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs of Delhi achieved a union of hearts which "not even the conflagration around them in all other parts of India or Pakistan will be strong enough to break." The fittest answer to his fast should be "a complete friendship between the two Dominions such that members of all communities should be able to go to either Dominion without the slightest fear of molestation. . . . It will be wrong for the rest of the two Dominions to put too heavy a strain upon Delhi. After all, the inhabitants of the Union are not superhuman. In the name of the people our Government have taken a liberal step without counting the cost. What will be Pakistan's counter-gesture? The ways are many if there is the will. Is it there?" he asked.

Contrary to all expectations his voice was less feeble when he delivered his oral address in the microphone from his bed to the prayer gathering that evening, than on the day before. He could not explain it, he observed, except as a sign of God's grace. Never before had he felt so well on the fourth day of his fast. If all of them continued to participate in the process of self-purification, he would probably have the strength to speak to them till the end. He was in no hurry to break the fast. No-one should come and tell him that things had been set right while the process was incomplete.

7

The revocation of the Cabinet decision in regard to the release of Pakistan's share of the cash balances proved for Sardar Patel to be the proverbial last straw on the camel's back. Time and again he had felt compelled to differ from his Cabinet colleagues on matters of high policy. He knew, too, that his outlook on several issues was not shared by Gandhiji and yet Gandhiji had always stood up chivalrously for him against unjust attacks. That Gandhiji should have to defend him hurt his pride. Gandhiji, the Sardar knew, was the last person to ask anyone to act against his lights but he knew also how deeply some

of his decisions had distressed Gandhiji. The thought of it made him unhappy beyond words. The man of granite took the only decision which, as a disciplined soldier, a loyal comrade, and a Minister of State faithful to his trust, as he understood his trust, he could take. He had to leave for Saurashtra on the 16th January, for an important engagement. Gandhiji had insisted on his keeping it. Before leaving he addressed a letter to Gandhiji:

> I have to leave for Kathiawad at seven this morning. It is agonising beyond endurance to have to go away when you are fasting. But stern duty leaves no other course.
>
> The sight of your anguish yesterday has made me disconsolate. It has set me furiously thinking.
>
> The burden of work has become so heavy that I feel crushed under it. I now see that it would do no good to the country or to myself to carry on like this any more. It might even do harm.
>
> Jawahar is even more burdened than I. His heart is heavy with grief. Maybe I have deteriorated with age and am no more any good as a comrade to stand by him, and lighten his burden. The Maulana (Azad) too is displeased with what I am doing and you have again and again to take up cudgels on my behalf. This also is intolerable to me.
>
> In the circumstances, it will perhaps be good for me and for the country if you now let me go. I cannot do otherwise than I am doing. And if thereby I become burdensome to my lifelong colleagues and a source of distress to you and still I stick to office, it would mean—at least that is how I would feel—that I let the lust of power blind my eyes and so was unwilling to quit. You should quickly deliver me from this intolerable situation.
>
> I know, it is no time for argument while you are fasting. But since I can be of no help even in ending your fast, I do not know what else there is for me to do. I therefore earnestly beseech you to give up your fast and get this question settled soon. It may help even remove the causes that have prompted your fast.

On returning to Bombay from Saurashtra, the Sardar unburdened himself in a public speech as follows: "Our prestige went up when we achieved independence but subsequent events have brought it down. If in spite of having achieved independence, Gandhiji has to fast in order to achieve real Hindu-Muslim unity, it is a standing shame to us. You have just now heard people shouting that Muslims should be removed from India. Those who do so have gone mad with anger. Even a lunatic is better than a person who is mad with rage. He can be treated and perhaps cured, but the other? They do not realise that

they stand to gain nothing by driving out a handful of Muslims. I am a frank man. I say bitter things to Hindus and Muslims alike. . . . Some of them (Muslims) went to Gandhiji and complained about my Lucknow speech in which I had criticised them for not condemning Pakistan's attitude on Kashmir. . . . Gandhiji felt compelled to defend me. That pained me. For . . . I am not a weak person who should be defended by others."[24]

Commented Gandhiji that if they would carefully read the Sardar's speech at Bombay, they would realise that there was "no difference of outlook" between the Sardar, Pandit Nehru and himself.[25] They were all working for the same end. None of them was the enemy of the Muslims.

* * *

Among those who came to see Gandhiji on the fourth day of his fast were his old friends the Delhi Maulanas. They reported that there was a "remarkable improvement" in the city and on the strength of it they entreated him once more to give up his fast. Exaggeration had been their besetting sin. Gandhiji had more than once noted this failing of theirs with deep pain. It could well be their and the Indian Muslims' undoing. But he had not the heart to be hard upon them before, when they were distraught with grief. But finding the same failing in their expression of concern for him, he promptly took advantage of it to bring home to them the much needed lesson. They must be extremely careful, he warned them, and weigh every word they uttered. Above all they must say nothing to please him, or out of false pity try to coax him out of his resolve.

His fast thus enabled Gandhiji to clear up one Augean stable after another and yet he felt that more was needed. And so when a little later some Hindu and Sikh refugees came to him, followed by Pandit Nehru, and reported that conditions in the city were fast improving, he told them not to be in too great a hurry. "I won't pop off suddenly," he said to them. "Whatever you do should ring true. I want solid work."

The doctors were perturbed. Gandhiji's weight, which for the first two days of the fast had shown on the average a drop of nearly 2 lbs. per day, had become stationary at 107 lbs. The system was getting water-logged, owing to the failing kidney function. This meant more and more strain on the already enfeebled heart.

Persistent refusal on Gandhiji's part to terminate the fast led everybody to ask what specific test would satisfy him. Just then a telegram from Karachi came. Muslim refugees who had been driven out of Delhi asked whether they could now return to Delhi and reoccupy their original houses. "That is the test," Gandhiji remarked as soon as he had read the telegram. I immediately set out with that telegram on a round

of all the Hindu and Sikh refugee camps in the city to explain to them what they had to do to enable Gandhiji to end his fast. By night 1,000 refugees had signed a declaration that they would welcome the Muslims to return and occupy their original homes even though with their families they might have themselves to weather the biting winter cold of Delhi in refugee camps. Some refugees who were settled in the houses of Muslims said they would vacate them to make room for the returning owners: "Your fast has moved human hearts all over the world. We cherish the noble object and share your anxiety for which the fast is undertaken. . . . We give you our fullest assurance that we shall work for peace, goodwill and communal harmony. . . . We give you our fullest assurance that we shall welcome the return of Muslims to their homes in Delhi from Karachi or from any part of Pakistan. We shall work for making India as much a home for Muslims as it is for Hindus, Sikhs and other communities of India. Pray break your fast to save India from misery."

There was a distinct feeling of optimism in Delhi on the fifth day of Gandhiji's fast. The Government of India's decision on the implementation of the financial agreement with Pakistan, it was hoped, would create conditions which would lead to an early termination of his fast. This hope was further strengthened when the Delhi administration announced that within a week's time, every non-Muslim refugee in Delhi would be provided with some kind of shelter. Pandit Nehru and some Ministers of the Central Cabinet threw open their official residences to all homeless refugees short of moving out themselves.

Then, as had so often happened before, the tide began to turn fast. The whole of Delhi boiled over. There were numerous processions parading through the various parts of the city shouting unity slogans and praying for the long life of the Mahatma. The Maharaja of Patiala came and told Gandhiji that he had sent forth word to rally all groups and sections of the Sikhs to bring about peaceful conditions in Delhi. Patiala State had been one of the black spots during the communal disturbances but the Maharaja protested his innocence, saying he had no reason for wanting to drive out the Muslims from his State, nor was he in any way responsible for what had happened there. The alibi was rather thin but Gandhiji was always prepared to give repentance still another chance. The Nawab of Maler Kotla with his son also came. He narrated to Gandhiji how during the disturbances when some of the Muslim refugees in his State had begun to threaten the local Sikhs, he announced that for every Sikh or Hindu molested, he would shoot ten Muslims. "Not a single incident occurred after that." One of his ancestors, he narrated, had courageously stood up against the Emperor Aurangzeb when the latter had declared his intention of killing the sons of one of the Sikh Gurus. Since then the Sikhs everywhere had given asylum to the Muslims from Maler Kotla and *vice versa*. As a result,

during the post-partition communal troubles, Maler Kotla became a sanctuary for Sikhs and Hindus. Similarly, it was reported that when Muslims travelling anywhere in the Punjab could prove that they were from Maler Kotla, they were given protection by the Sikhs. When Gandhiji heard this, he exclaimed, "So my dream for India came true in Maler Kotla!"

Gandhiji had always said that there was no truth however harsh but could be told without hurting feelings if there was nothing but unadulterated love behind the telling. Every day that passed provided a living demonstration of it. In the course of his prayer address on the evening of the 17th January, he remarked that the number of telegrams coming from every side was continuing to increase. There were numerous telegrams from Pakistan too. They were good so far as they went. But as their friend and well-wisher he was bound to tell those who were moulding the destiny of Pakistan that if their conscience was not quickened and they failed to see and admit the wrongs for which Pakistan was responsible, they would not be able to make Pakistan permanent. He had accepted partition as a *fait accompli* and he had said that he would not mind the whole of India becoming Pakistan if Pakistan meant what its name implied, i.e. the land of the pure. That did not mean that he approved of partition or that "I do not wish for a voluntary reunion, but I wish to remove and resist the idea that Pakistan should be reunited by force of arms. I hope that this will not be misunderstood as a note of discord, whilst I am lying on what is truly a death-bed. I hope all Pakistanis will realise that I would be untrue to them and to myself if out of weakness and for fear of hurting their feelings, I failed to convey to them what I truthfully feel. If I am wrong . . . I should be told and, if I am convinced, I promise that I shall retract what I have said here. So far as I know, the point is not open to question."

He repeated the warning to the people of the Indian Union, too. Nothing should be done under the pressure of the fast. He had observed before that what was done under pressure of a fast was undone after the fast was over. "What a spiritual fast does . . . is a cleaning of the hearts. The cleaning, if it is honest, does not cease to be when the cause which induced it ceases. . . . It ceases only with one's death. . . . Neither the Rajas and Maharajas nor the Hindus and Sikhs or any others would serve themselves or India . . . if at this, what to me is a sacred juncture, they misled me with a view to terminating my fast. Let them know that I feel never so happy as when I am fasting for the spirit. This fast has brought me higher happiness than hitherto. No-one need disturb this happy state, unless he can honestly claim that in his journey he had turned deliberately from Satan towards God."

Arthur Moore, veteran journalist and former editor of *The Statesman*, had all along been a sceptic as to the validity of the method of

fasting for solving social problems. But a change had been coming over him since Gandhiji's Calcutta fast in August, 1947. He started fasting in sympathy when he heard about Gandhiji's decision to fast for communal peace in the capital. In a note which he addressed to Gandhiji, he wrote:

> I am not one of those who would seek to dissuade you. I am sure you are right. Only a miracle can save the two Dominions from further terrible disasters if these hatreds continue. You did much in Calcutta. But far more is needed here; you are the only hope. . . . I feel that people who approve and sympathise can help and strengthen you by fasting in sympathy. For this reason I also have not tasted food or any liquor but water since Tuesday or since you began your fast, and I hope to continue while you fast. . . . Last night I fulfilled a dinner engagement but joined only in the conversation. I think you will this time change many hearts. You can be sure you have my prayers.

Gandhiji was deeply touched. He dictated a reply: "He believes you will do better work by moving about and mixing with the people and influencing them. He would, therefore, urge you to give up the fast, unless there is an imperative spiritual call. . . . A spiritual fast is one where there is an inner urge . . . and where the person believes, not after the orthodox fashion but in his own way, in the living God, which Gandhiji affirms very few in the world do."

After Gandhiji's death, Arthur Moore recorded: "I now see that I altogether underrated the loving content which Gandhiji gave to the word Ahimsa, and that this sprang from his own deep love of humanity, which far exceeded anything of which I was capable."[26]

Towards evening on the 17th of January, nausea set in and the heaviness in Gandhiji's head increased. The restlessness had been on the increase since the afternoon. One of the doctors in attendance told Gandhiji that if he added but 2 ounces of orange juice to the water he drank he would be satisfied. Gandhiji replied that in that event his fast would have to be of "at least 21 days' duration," commencing from the day on which he took orange juice. Similarly when cupping over the kidneys was suggested to induce them to function, Gandhiji replied: "I appreciate your affection but let me die if die I must."

"But is not cupping, too, a kind of fomentation which you have not ruled out under nature-cure?" one of the attendants asked.

"That is how we slip from our resolves," replied Gandhiji. "Ramanama alone is now my nature-cure." And he had one of his companions sing to him a devotional song from Tulsidas instead, followed by a recitation of the twelfth chapter of the Gita. Pandit Nehru, as he looked at the suffering form before him, could bear the agony of it no longer.

Quickly he turned away his face to wipe from his eye a glistening tear.

"Man shall not live by bread alone" holds good in its literal sense in a perfect fast. An astonishing thing about Gandhiji's long fasts was the phenomenal mental vigour and energy that he exhibited during them. The mind became more keen and alert as the fast progressed, the intuitions sharper, the insight deeper and the spirit more sensitive, intense and full of forgiveness and compassion. His day's schedule on the fifth day of his fast in January, 1948, was as follows: The morning prayer as usual at 3.30 a.m.; dictated a letter to Richard Symonds, whom only a few weeks before he had taken in as his patient and nursed him through an attack of the enteric in Birla House; after his daily Bengali writing had the morning papers, and important incoming letters and telegrams read out to him; medical check-up by the doctors followed by massage and bath etc. till 10.30 a.m.; dictated to me his statement on the Government of India's decision on the release of Pakistan's share of the cash balances while lying in his bath-tub. Between 10.30 a.m. and midday received seven visitors, including three ruling chiefs of States. Between 12.30 and 3.35, in between rest and various items of nature-cure treatment, again had serious talks with ten visitors, including Pandit Nehru, Maulana Azad and four Maulanas of Delhi. After the evening prayer received a big crowd of people, one Maharaja, one Chief Minister and nearly half a dozen Ministers of the Central Cabinet of the Indian Union.

The doctors' bulletin on the fifth day of Gandhiji's fast sounded a grave note of warning: "In our opinion, it would be most undesirable to let the fast continue. Therefore it is our duty to tell the people . . . to take immediate steps to produce the requisite conditions for ending the fast without delay."

But with all that when in the evening, breaking all precedent for the Governor-General, Lord Mountbatten with his wife paid him a visit, he was ready to greet them with a quip: "It takes a fast on my part to bring the mountain to Mohammed!" It was more than a personal visit on his part, Mountbatten afterwards explained. Apart from the natural anxiety for the health of a friend, he was anxious to give an indication to the world—and to the Mahatma—that he was with him in the object of his fast.

Addressing a peace rally in the city the same evening Maulana Azad informed the gathering that he had met Gandhiji in the afternoon and told him that while he had undertaken the fast to bring about "a change of heart" among the people, it was difficult to assess when the required change of heart had taken place. Could not Gandhiji, therefore, let them have concrete conditions which, if fulfilled, would persuade him to break his fast? Gandhiji had thereupon mentioned to him seven conditions. The fast would be ended when all parties gave their signatures to those conditions. The assurances, Gandhiji had further said,

must come from responsible people who could guarantee their proper fulfilment. "He must not be given false assurance," the Maulana Saheb warned. "To that apostle of Truth we must give true assurance only. We are not to concoct make-believes even to save his life. If we can perform what he has called upon us to do, then alone can we go to him and ask him to give up his fast. Otherwise it would be better that we leave him in the hands of God."

Sabzimandi, the vegetable and fruit market in old Delhi, had been one of the worst affected areas. Muslims in this area had been subjected to an economic boycott. The non-Muslim shop-keepers of Sabzimandi now came and told Gandhiji that they had lifted the boycott. The Muslims were free to come to their shops.

As a mark of popular concern, all business in the city was suspended for the day and Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in their thousands came out and formed mixed processions. One of them was nearly one hundred thousand strong and over a mile long. They all converged on Birla House, where they terminated and dispersed. Some processions, however, that arrived after the evening prayer meeting was over, were allowed to enter the Birla House compound and directed to assemble at the prayer ground, where Pandit Nehru addressed them. For the last twenty years their country had followed the advice and guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru said to them. No doubt they had adhered to those principles, but of late these principles had no longer been so prominent inside the Congress itself. There was a tendency to split. "Sometimes during the last few months I have often doubted whether the vision of a free India, based upon progress and good philosophy could be realised so that she could take a prominent place in Asia and in the rest of the world. Mahatma Gandhi's fast is intended to build up our inner strength so that we can tread along the right path."

The Delhi Hotel Workers' Union decided to take out a procession in the afternoon next day. All hotels and restaurants, in consequence, remained closed on the 18th January, the sixth day of Gandhiji's fast.

A Central Peace Committee, consisting of 130 members representing all communities, was formed under the Chairmanship of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President. The Committee met at Dr. Prasad's residence on the evening of the 17th January and adopted a resolution assuring Gandhiji that they would do all that lay in their power "to create, establish and maintain the spirit of peace, harmony and brotherhood between all communities." The representatives of some Hindu organisations, noted for their extreme communal bias, were not present in this meeting. In their absence, their friends gave a guarantee on their behalf. To me this seemed rather suspicious. But some members thought that in view of the fact that the sands were running out fast, an attempt should be made to persuade Gandhiji to end his fast on the basis of the Committee's resolution without waiting

for the absentees' signatures. I knew full well the danger. For only the other day he had fainted in my arms while getting out of his bath-tub after dictating to me his statement on the Government of India's decision to release the amount of rupees fifty-five crores to Pakistan. But with certain knowledge that Gandhiji would regard the signatures by proxy as a fatal flaw, I felt it necessary to sound a note of warning. I told the Committee what his reaction was likely to be. Dr Rajendra Prasad agreed with me. Finally it was decided that they should wait till next morning and in the meantime emissaries should be sent round to contact the absentee members.

When I returned to Birla House at half-past nine at night with the report of the Peace Committee's meeting, everybody's face there was grave. Gandhiji was fast asleep. It seems he had been feeling very bad in the latter part of the evening, and had been asking in a delirium to be removed to his bed when he was in it already. The doctors were very worried over continued incontinence of urine. I called him softly several times to wake him up. No good. At last I gently shook him. He woke up and very attentively heard the report that I gave him. On the whole he seemed satisfied. But as I had anticipated, he insisted upon the absentees' signatures being obtained and again emphasised that nothing should be done in a hurry. The stoniest heart must melt before he gave up his fast. The foundation would need to be very solid if the effect was to be lasting. He warned that the penalty for a breach of the undertaking given to him would be nothing less than the forfeit of his life by an unconditional fast unto death on his part.

He slept well at night and woke up next morning for prayer as usual at 3.30 a.m. After drinking some hot water he began to dictate letters. When the doctors came to examine him, he complained of stomach ache. The weight being taken by Pandit Nehru, the scale ominously registered a steady 107 lbs.

The Peace Committee again met on the morning of the 18th January. The absentees of the previous night were present. The representatives of all the important groups and organisations in the city were there, including representatives of the refugees from Karol Bagh, Sabzimandi and Paharganj, the three worst affected parts of the city. They all accepted the conditions laid down by Gandhiji and gave their signatures to the following pledge:

> We wish to announce that it is our heartfelt desire that Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and members of other communities should once again live in Delhi like brothers and in perfect amity. We take the pledge that we shall protect the life, property and faith of the Muslims and that the incidents which have taken place in Delhi will not happen again.
>
> 1. We want to assure Gandhiji that the annual fair at Khwaja

Qutabuddin's mausoleum will be held this year as in previous years.

2. The Muslims will be able to move about in Sabzimandi, Karol Bagh, Paharganj and other localities just as they could in the past.

3. The mosques which have been left by the Muslims and which are now in the possession of Hindus and Sikhs will be returned. The areas which have been set apart for the Muslims will not be forcibly occupied.

4. We shall not object to the return to Delhi of the Muslims who have migrated from here if they choose to come back, and the Muslims shall be able to carry on their business as before. We give the assurance that all these things will be done by our personal efforts and not with the help of the police or the military.

We request Mahatmaji to believe us and give up his fast and continue to lead us as he has done hitherto.

While the signatures were being collected, news came over the phone from Birla House that Gandhiji's condition had suddenly worsened. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, with some members of the Committee, thereupon hurried to Birla House to explain to Gandhiji in advance the conditions agreed to by the members of the Peace Committee. It would have taken some time for all the members to assemble there and every minute counted.

When all the members had arrived in Birla House, Gandhiji's room was packed to capacity. The gathering included Pandit Nehru, and Maulana Azad, Zahid Husain, the High Commissioner for Pakistan, and representatives of the Delhi Muslims, the R.S.S., the Hindu Mahasabha and various Sikh organisations. The Delhi Administration was represented by the Chief Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad narrated how they had on the previous night after full discussion decided to sign the declaration then and there. But as representatives of some organisations were not present in that meeting, they felt they should wait till the remaining signatures were obtained. This had since been done. In the morning meeting even those who had some lingering doubts on the previous night were confident that they could now, with a full sense of their responsibility, ask Gandhiji to break the fast. It had been decided to set up a number of committees to implement the pledge. In view of the guarantees that had jointly and severally been given, Dr. Rajendra Prasad proceeded, they all hoped that Gandhiji would now break his fast. A member described how a procession of 150 Muslims had been taken that morning to Sabzimandi, where they were greeted with fruit and refreshment by the Hindus.

Replying Gandhiji said that they had given him all that he had asked for. But if their words meant that they held themselves responsible for communal peace in Delhi only and what happened in other places was no concern of theirs, then their guarantee was nothing worth and he would feel, and they too would one day realise, that it was a big blunder on his part to have given up his fast. They should clearly realise the implications of their pledge. What they had achieved in Delhi had to be realised in the whole of India. If things in Delhi were set right, it would set things right in Pakistan, too.

He reminded them that he was not a man to shirk another fast, if he afterwards discovered that he had been deceived, or had deceived himself, into breaking it prematurely. They should, therefore, be extremely wary and act with full sincerity. He invited the representatives of Muslims who had been meeting him frequently to tell him whether they were satisfied that the conditions in Delhi were now such as to warrant his breaking the fast.

Addressing next a few words to the Muslims especially, he asked if there was any ground for the suspicion that the Muslims did not regard India as their country. He hoped the suspicion was baseless. Similarly, if there were any Hindus who regarded the Muslims as *yavanas* (aliens) or *asuras* (by nature evil) incapable of realising God, they were guilty of the worst blasphemy. Such sentiment could possibly have no room in the covenant which they had signed.

He then referred to a book which a Muslim friend had presented to him at Patna. In that book, it was written that according to the Koran, *kafirs*, i.e. Hindus, were worse than poisonous reptiles, fit only to be exterminated. He was sure no God-fearing Muslim could subscribe to that creed.

Concluding Gandhiji remarked that if they fully accepted the implications of their pledge, they should release him from Delhi so that he might be free to go to Pakistan. In his absence they should welcome such refugees from Pakistan as might want to return to their homes.

Maulana Azad, speaking after Gandhiji, said that he could not leave unchallenged the observation made in the book to which Gandhiji had referred, as it pertained to the teachings of Islam. He had no hesitation in characterising it as a libel on Islam. The representative of the Delhi Muslims followed. He categorically repudiated the allegation that the Indian Muslims did not regard India as their country which claimed their full and undivided allegiance, but only as a place of refuge where they had to live from expediency under the compulsion of circumstances. They regarded it as an insult to their nationalism to be asked to reiterate their loyalty to India. If India were attacked, they would defend it to the last man. He would even go further, he said, and tell his co-religionists that those who were not prepared to do so should leave India and take themselves to Pakistan. Describing the change that had come over the city

as a result of Gandhiji's fast, the speaker remarked that they were satisfied that the tide had definitely turned and was now fast flowing in the direction of communal harmony and peace where previously bitterness and hatred prevailed. Since the administration had under-written the assurance given by the representatives of the people, they had every reason to believe that it would be implemented, though it might take some time. He joined Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his appeal to Gandhiji to break his fast.

After the High Commissioner for Pakistan had reiterated the appeal, followed by the representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha, the R.S.S., the Sikhs and the representative of the Delhi Administration, Gandhiji broke the fast on the 18th January, 1948, at 12.45 p.m., by receiving the glass of orange juice (8 ounces with glucose 1 ounce) at the hands of Maulana Azad. Pandit Nehru's eyes were wet with tears.

The gathering then dispersed but Pandit Nehru stayed on. It was only then that he revealed to Gandhiji that he had been fasting with him from the day before. He had kept it as a closely guarded secret even from members of his own household. Gandhiji was deeply moved. As soon as Pandit Nehru had left, he scribbled a note for Pandit Nehru and gave it to me to be delivered to him personally. The note read: "Now break your fast. . . . May you live for many long years and continue to be the Jawahar (the jewel) of India. Bapu's blessings."

In the midst of it all Gandhiji suddenly remembered Arthur Moore. "Telephone to Moore at once," he said to my sister, "that I have broken my fast and that he should now break his. And give him instructions as to the proper way of breaking a fast. This probably being his first fast, he might not be knowing the correct way." On being contacted over the phone, Arthur Moore, however, replied that he had already, on receiving the happy news a little while ago, broken his fast with a cup of coffee and a cigar!

8

Stirring news continued to pour in through the rest of the day. It was reported that more than two hundred thousand citizens of Delhi had signed a peace pledge in response to Gandhiji's desire to restore complete communal harmony. The pledge read as follows:

> We the Hindu, Sikh, Christian and other citizens of Delhi declare solemnly our conviction that the Muslim citizens of the Indian Union should be as free as the rest of us to live in Delhi in peace and security and with self-respect, and to work for the good and well-being of the Indian Union.
>
> We hereby pledge resolutely to do all in our power individually and collectively to promote a sense of security and

inter-communal amity in Delhi so that Indian citizens of all faiths may live and work together in Delhi for the greater good of the Indian Union and for the maintenance of our newly won freedom.

In many refugee camps the refugees had started fasting with Gandhiji. They said they would break their fast only after Gandhiji had broken his. At noon, on the 18th January, about 100 Muslim women in *purda* came to Birla House. Although the doctors had interdicted all visits, Gandhiji asked them to be brought into his presence. They said that for the last five days they had been fasting and praying in their homes that God might spare him. "You do not observe *purda* before your fathers and brothers, then why do you observe it in my presence?" Gandhiji asked them. Up went the *purda*. "It is not the first time that the *purda* has disappeared before me," Gandhiji remarked afterwards. "This shows what genuine love can do."

As soon as the room was again clear, he called me and said : "Go to Zahid Husain and find out from him whether they would now like me to visit Pakistan." Zahid Husain was effusive in praise of Gandhiji's fast. His wife was a great admirer of Gandhiji, he said. She had read his works in Urdu translation. He was receiving daily telephone calls from Karachi to inquire about Gandhiji's health. "You do not know how deeply his latest act of sacrifice has stirred the hearts of the people of Pakistan." But when I asked him whether this meant that the Government of Pakistan would now welcome his visit to Pakistan, his countenance fell. "No, not yet," he mumbled forth. "But I hope that conditions will have changed for the better sufficiently before long." The Pakistan Government were not quite satisfied with the conduct of the authorities on the Indian side. In the Simla High Court, Muslims were still not being allowed to practise, and so on. "There seems little chance of my completing the full span of 125 years," Gandhiji remarked with a deep sigh as I reported to him the conversation with the Pakistan High Commissioner.

Speaking on the microphone from his bed for nearly twenty minutes in the evening, Gandhiji said that it was a happy day for him and for all of them. He was glad that due to their kindness he could break his fast on the auspicious day of Guru Govind Singh's birthday anniversary. People had many suspicions about Suhrawardy's bona fides still. This had to go. They should forget the past and learn the duty of having friendly feelings for all and being inimical to none. Their face was hitherto turned towards Satan; now he hoped it would be turned Godward. The Union would then lead the way to world peace. He asked Hindus and Sikhs to study and understand the meaning of the Koran with the same care and regard as they did the Gita and the Granth Saheb and the Muslims to do the same in respect of the Hindu and Sikh scriptures. They must cultivate equal regard for all religions.

If it was wrong to seek God in a stone, how was it right, he asked, to seek Him in a book called the Gita, the Granth Saheb, or the Koran? Was not that also idol worship? By cultivating tolerance and respect, they would be able to learn from all. He would not be at peace with himself, he said, till Muslims were able freely and fearlessly to move about in the Union and Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan. Hindu sufferers should be able to return to their homes in Pakistan with honour and dignity and the Muslims to theirs in the Union.

> I embarked on the fast in the name of Truth whose familiar name is God. Without living Truth God is nowhere. In the name of God we have indulged in lies, massacres of people, without caring whether they were innocent or guilty, men or women, children or infants. . . . (But) I am not aware if anybody has done these things in the name of Truth. With the same name on my lips I have broken the fast. . . .
>
> Telegrams after telegrams have come from Pakistan and the Indian Union urging me to break my fast. I could not resist the counsel of all these friends. I could not disbelieve their pledge that come what may, there would be complete friendship between the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and Jews, a friendship not to be broken. . . .
>
> If the solemn pledge made today is fulfilled, I assure you that it will revive with redoubled force my intense wish and prayer before God that I should be enabled to live the full span of life, doing service of humanity till the last moment. . . .
>
> The letter of my vow has been fulfilled early beyond expectation through the great goodwill of all the citizens of Delhi, including the leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha and the R.S.S. . . . Signed assurances of heart friendship have been pouring in upon me from thousands. . . . Can there be a better sign of God's hand in this act of mine? But beyond the letter of fulfilment of my solemn vow lies its spirit without which the letter killeth. The spirit of the vow is sincere friendship between the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of the Union and a similar friendship in Pakistan. . . . Numerous messages have come from Pakistan, not one of dissent. May God, who is Truth, guide us as He has visibly guided us during all these six days.

After the prayer meeting, there was a clamour for Gandhiji's *darshan*. It had been raining heavily. The guest house in the Birla House was crammed full of women who had taken shelter there, many of them with their infants-in-arms, soaked to the skin by the wintry rain, whom they were trying to thaw before a couple of radiators and the infra-red apparatus that had been installed there for Gandhiji's use. They said, they would not go unless they had the

darshan. For their convenience Gandhiji was taken on to the verandah in a chair which was held aloft so that the rain-drenched crowd could see him from outside.

The great spiritual adventure had come to a triumphant end. With it also ended the bliss of ineffable peace which suffering joyfully undergone to end other people's suffering gives.

Gandhiji to Rajaji 21st January, 1948

> From calm I have entered storm. Thank God I have fairly learnt to face either with same amount of indifference.

* * *

Gandhiji's fast was a sign and a portent. The avalanche of telegrams and messages of sympathy and congratulations that poured in from all parts of the world during and after the fast was phenomenal. An even more notable feature was the upsurge of enthusiasm, thanksgiving and pride which it evoked in many of the Asian and African countries. It was as if in that symbolical act the East had rediscovered its soul and the secret of the timeless message that alone could save the world from self-destruction—the message of the spirit which in losing itself finds itself.

"We here in the Arab world," ran a message from Cairo, "feel most grateful and honoured by the high moral example of self-sacrifice you gave this week to the whole world. . . . I am expressing the sentiments of millions of Arabs when I send you . . . congratulations . . . and pray God to save you as a noble son of the East who is dedicating his life for peace, religious tolerance and brotherhood."

A cable from Mohammad Hatta, the Vice-President of Indonesia, after describing Gandhiji's leadership of the Indian people in achieving the freedom of India as "a beacon light to us" which had "largely inspired us in our own struggle", went on to say: "You have blazed a new trail in the unique way in which you have achieved freedom for the Indian people—the dawn of freedom for the whole of Asia. . . . Though men's minds have raised narrow barriers amongst the great people of India, we sincerely hope that once again the people of the ancient subcontinent will rally round you in their hour of crisis, which we regard as a crisis for the whole of Asia. Peace and progress in India is the precursor to peace and progress in Asia."

Tai Chi-Tao, President of Examination Yuan of the Republic of China, cabled: "His (Gandhiji's) personality is a bright torch lighting the path of mankind. The Chinese people . . . are heartily in accord with all that Gandhiji stands for. . . . "

Very touching was a message from New York from that indefatigable servant of humanity and champion of the down-trodden races in the struggle against racialism, Rev. Michael Scott: "Your sacrifice

for future of humanity challenges all who are for peace and confounds those whose evil machinations everywhere threaten to destroy mankind. Evil consequences of the past which India is now bearing will be overcome by Satyagraha and your invincible spirit will always inspire mankind." The message was signed: "Your grateful pupil Michael."

"Mr. Gandhi's courageous idealism has never been more plainly vindicated," commented the London *Times*.

The *Manchester Guardian* wrote: "India will have good cause to thank the courage and spiritual strength of this frail old man who may be a politician among saints but is no less a saint among politicians."

In the place of its usual feature articles, the Liberal daily *News Chronicle*, quoted at length from Gandhiji's writings after his 21-day fast in 1924 under the heading, "The mystery and power of a frail old man of 77 shakes the world and inspires it with new hope." "The success of Mahatma Gandhi's fast," the journal observed, "demonstrates a power which may prove greater than the atom bomb and which the West should watch with envy and hope. At the time when tempers in India and Pakistan were rising fast, men have been halted in their tracks. . . . In Western Europe and in America, it has long been recognised that Mr. Gandhi is wielding a force against which no material weapons can prevail, he is mobilising man against the things which man created and man in the end will always be greater than his creations."

The *Washington Post* in a leading article commented as follows under the caption "Moral of Leadership":

> In a day when the influence of men is measured almost wholly by the size of armies they can assemble or by the amounts of money they can mobilise, moral or spiritual leadership appears an almost quaint and romantic concept. . . . Gandhi has demonstrated once more as he has done on so many previous occasions the power of such leadership in mundane affairs. . . . From the point of view of Western culture the mode of spiritual settlement seems even more strange than the strife which occasioned it. The hunger strike has been tried . . . as a means of exerting moral suasion here and in Europe . . . but it has not proved particularly effective in coercing consent. . . . The wave of relief that has swept the Western as well as Eastern world over the knowledge that his fast has been broken in time to spare his life, affords a measure of the sainthood with which he has been invested. . . . In the West no less than in the East there is need for the assertion of some such spiritual and moral power as Gandhi—some moral suasion which will arrest the passions flinging men headlong down the road towards fratricidal conflict.

Speculating as to why the fast had produced such a spectacular

result in India, the paper ventured to suggest that the reason perhaps was that, "Gandhi who . . . had so often resorted to fasting as a means of wresting for his people concessions from the British was acting in the one fashion which he had taught to his people to respect—perhaps the only fashion that could have had meaning for them."

The real reason, however, was not quite what the writer seems to have imagined. Power of non-violence is in direct proportion to one's capacity to use violence if one wished to. The phenomenal success of Gandhiji's fasts in general and the last one in particular was not due to the fact that they were addressed to a disarmed people to whom no other kind of suasion could have any meaning, circumstanced as they were, but because they were addressed by an individual who had realised that the power of the spirit is more potent than the force of arms or for that matter any other form of force; because he had deliberately decided to choose the way of self-suffering when he could have invoked the entire machinery of the State for realising his immediate objective, because the vicarious suffering was undertaken for the love of those who had led the hymn of hate against him and all that was dear and near to his heart, and because back of it was that complete self-surrender, which comes from attunement with the all-pervading immanent spirit, so much so that the very desire to live apart from Him had vanished. In the course of an intimate talk with a very dear friend on the fifth day of his fast, Gandhiji remarked: "In one respect this fast is different from all my previous fasts—even from my Calcutta fast six months earlier. My determination to go on even at the time of the fast at Calcutta of course never flagged but I was not indifferent as to when the fast would end. This time it is otherwise. I would welcome its successful termination—I am not fond of fasting as such—but there is no eagerness or impatience to anticipate it. For instance, when anyone comes to me now I am not in the least eager to know whether he has brought any news that would enable me to break my fast. I have completely surrendered myself to Him and I revel in my surrender, irrespective of the condition I may be in."

Finally, Gandhiji's fasts touched the hearts of the millions in India not because humanity is different in the East from what it is anywhere else but because by ceaseless striving he had so completely identified himself with those millions, so made their joys and sufferings his own that when he suffered, they suffered with him. Dr. Zimmer has, with rare insight put in language that can only be described as prophetic the whole thing in a nutshell thus:

> India . . . philosophical, unpractical, and hopelessly unsuccessful in the maintenance of her political freedom, has always stood for the idea that wisdom can be power if . . . the

> wisdom permeates, transforms, controls, and moulds the whole of the personality. The sage is not to be a library of philosophy . . . an encyclopedia with a human voice. Thought itself is to be converted in him into life, into flesh, into being, into a skill in act. And then the higher his realisation, the greater will be his power. The magic of Mahatma Gandhi is to be understood . . . in this way. . . . His spiritual stature is expressed and honoured in the title bestowed upon him: Mahatma; "whose essence of being is great," "he in whom the super-personal, supra-individual, divine essence, which pervades the whole universe and dwells within the microcosm of the human heart as the animating grace of God (*atman*), has grown to such magnitude as to have become utterly predominant (*mahat*)." The spiritual Person has swallowed and dissolved in him all traces of ego, all the limitations proper to personal individuation, all those limiting, fettering qualities and propensities that belong to the normal human state, and even every trace remaining from ego-motivated deeds (*karma*), whether good or evil, whether derived from this life or from deeds in former births. Such traces of personality bias and distort a man's outlook on worldy affairs and prevent his approach to divine truth. But the Mahatma is the man who has become transformed in his being through wisdom; and the power of such a presence to work magic we may yet live to see.[27]

This state cannot be attained by mechanical practice of any set formula. It comes through a lifetime of dedicated striving, self-discipline and patient waiting upon God. One has to grow into it.

On the day after he ended his fast, Gandhiji sounded a note of warning: "In this age of senseless imitation my warning is that it would be foolish for anybody to embark on such a fast expecting identical results in an identically short space of time. If anyone does, he will face severe disappointment and will discredit what is a hoary and infallible institution. Two severe qualifications are necessary—a living faith in God and a felt peremptory call from Him. I am tempted to add a third, but it is superfluous. *A peremptory call from God within presupposes the rightness, timeliness and propriety of the cause for which the fast is taken.* It follows that a long previous preparation is required. Let no-one, therefore, lightly embark on such a fast."[28] (Italics mine).

9

Fasting occupied a central place in Gandhiji's philosophy of life. He regarded fasting as an integral part of Satyagraha. It is a measure of the importance he attached to it that he undertook in his life seventeen fasts of varying lengths, the longest being of three weeks' duration.

Besides these there were partial fasts. One of them was in South Africa, when he remained on one spare meal a day for four and a half months. Another, which almost brought him to death's door, came in Noakhali in 1946. On this occasion he reduced his nourishment to less than 600 calories a day in the form of only fruit juice and glucose.

Again and again Gandhiji demonstrated the power of fasting. He called it the most potent weapon in the arsenel of Satyagraha. His experiments also showed, as in the case of his ill-fated Rajkot fast of 1938, how fatal to success the slightest error in its application can prove.[29] It is a much misunderstood and much abused weapon. It would be worthwhile, therefore, to examine here its basis, mode of action and the rules governing its use as propounded by Gandhiji.

The history of all great religions of the world is replete with instances of fasting for prayer and penance. Thus Buddha fasted, Mohammed fasted, so did Jesus Christ. There is a magnificent description of a fast unto death as penance and prayer by a whole people in the third chapter of Jonah. The prophet had foretold that Nineveh, the great city, was to be destroyed on the fortieth day of his entering it:

> So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and the nobles saying, 'Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn, every one, from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?' And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil he had said he would do unto them; and He did it not.

Apart from fasting for self-purification, one may fast as vicarious atonement for the lapses of those whom one loves and cherishes, to chastise them and to bring them to repentance. It may also be used to resist injustice or to obtain redress for wrong by an appeal to the conscience of the wrong-doer or of society.

Fasting as penance is used for the attainment of spirit's supremacy over the flesh. Subjugation of the flesh has been held all the world over as a necessary condition of spiritual progress. "It is my own firm belief," said Gandhiji, "that the strength of the soul grows in proportion as you subdue the flesh."[30]

We all have a weakness for the flesh. We are of the tribe of what Gandhiji called "full-mealers". "By parental training we are gluttons."[31] We forget that food was made not to indulge the palate, "but to sustain the body as our slave"[32] for the service of God's creation. This is not good for body, mind or soul. Gandhiji went so far as to say that a full meal was "crime against God and man—the latter because the full-mealers deprive their neighbours of their portion. God's economy provides from day to day just enough food for all in just medicinal doses. . . . Hence the necessity for a complete fast at intervals and partial fasts for ever."[33] "A genuine fast cleanses body, mind and soul. It crucifies the flesh and to that extent sets the soul free."[34] Fasting for prayer is thus a "most powerful process of purification."[35]

Fasting in the context of Satyagraha has to be of the widest character possible. "Fasting of the body has to be accompanied by fasting of *all* the senses" and organs.[36] For instance, if a man who fasts gambles away or lets his mind harbour impure thoughts, it would be a travesty of true fasting. "Such a dissolute fast leaves him on the contrary degraded."[37]

Thus there is no merit in starvation as such. More, "mortification of the flesh is a necessity when the flesh rebels against one; it is a sin when the flesh has come under subjection and can be used as instru ment of service."[38] Taking fasting in the widest sense, said Gandhiji, "there is no prayer without fasting, be the latter ever so little."[39] There is a saying of the Prophet of Islam also that it is not possible to pray on a full stomach; a full belly makes one "hard of heart". On the other hand, "fasting which is not an integral part of prayer is mere torture of the flesh, doing no good to anyone."[40]

Fasting gives body to prayer. "A complete fast is a complete and literal denial of self. It is the truest prayer."[41] Surely, said Gandhiji, "Take my life and let it be, always, only, all for Thee" was not meant to be a mere lip or figurative expression. "It has to be a reckless and joyous giving without the least reservation. Abstention from food and even water is but the mere beginning, the least part of the surrender."[42] "Complete absorption in prayer must mean complete exclusion of physical activities till prayer possesses the whole of our being and we rise superior to, and are completely detached from, all physical functions. That state can only be reached after continual and voluntary crucifixion of the flesh. Thus all fasting, if it is a spiritual act, is an intense prayer or a preparation for it. It is a yearning of the soul to merge in the divine essence."[43]

It is thus not the physical act of fasting but the spiritual content of the fast that gives to it its potency. "The mere fast of the body is nothing without the will behind it. It must be a genuine confession of the inner fast, an irrepressible longing to express truth and nothing but truth."[44]

If therefore "fasting and prayer seem at times not to answer, it is not because there is nothing in them but because the right spirit is not behind them."[45]

"My religion teaches me," wrote Gandhiji once," that whenever there is a distress which one cannot remove, one must fast and pray."[46] It had been his experience in India as well as in South Africa that when one is confronted by a stone wall of hardened blind prejudice, unreasoning obstinacy, anger, arrogance and inertia, or sheer stupidity, there is no remedy to compare with vicarious self-suffering. "Where prejudices are age-long mere appeal to reason does not answer. . . . Reason has to be strengthened by suffering."[47] Suffering opens up "the eye of understanding," and puts the final seal of authenticity on one's sincerity and non-violence. It stirs up as nothing else "sluggish consciences and fires loving hearts to action."[48] When well applied true fasting "generates a silent unseen force which may, if it is of requisite strength and purity, pervade all mankind."[49]

Gandhiji explained the rationale of fasting thus: "Those who have to bring about radical changes in human conditions and surroundings cannot do so except by raising a ferment in the society. There are only two methods of doing this—violence and non-violence. Non-violent pressure exerted through self-suffering by fasting . . . touches and strengthens the moral fibre of those against whom it is directed."[50] As a means for affecting mass mind it owes its potency to the fact that while the mass mind is not always influenced by mere verbal appeals, masses do "understand the language of the heart and fasting, when utterly unselfish, is the language of the heart."[51]

A genuine fast should never be "a mechanical effort, nor a mere imitation. It must come from the depth of one's soul."[52] Again, it is of no use without "a living faith in God."[53] Therefore, he who has no inner strength "should not dream of it, and never with attachment to success.[54] But if a Satyagrahi once undertakes a fast from conviction, he must stick to his resolve irrespective of whether there is a chance of his action bearing fruit or not. " He who fasts in the expectation of fruit generally fails. And even if he does not seemingly fail, he loses all the inner joy which a true fast holds."[55]

Needless to say that this weapon can be used on the rarest of occasions only. "Hunger-strikes undertaken without previous preparation and adequate thought"[56] can only harm the cause for which they are undertaken and "if the process is repeated too often, these hunger-strikes will lose what little efficacy they may possess and will become objects of ridicule."[57]

Is not a fast unto death a form of coercion? Does it not result in the suppression of reason and its subordination to emotionalism? Is it not blackmail to compel the opponent to yield a point which he otherwise would not be prepared to do?

Gandhiji's reply to it is emphatic. Love compels; it does not coerce. In the same way, truth too compels, and so does right, if we admit that right is might as it undeniably is. But surely one cannot describe the overpowering effect of moral pressure exerted by love, truth, or right by the term coercion as it is commonly understood. The method of redemption from error by the vicarious suffering of the pure in heart is not a new one. It is as old as religion itself. What Satyagraha does is not to suppress reason but to establish its sovereignty over prejudice, hatred, anger and other baser passions. In other words, if one may paradoxically put it, it does not enslave, it "compels" reason to be free. It dissolves the mists of mutual mistrust and suspicion that obscure the light of truth and divide man from man. By setting the final seal of sincerity and earnestness on the appeal of reason it lends weight and perspective to it.

It cannot be denied, Gandhiji admits, that fasts can be "really coercive". But that is when one fasts "to attain a selfish object".[58] Is it coercion, he asks, to credit the opponent with "finer feelings and evoke them by fasting?"[59] And why should it be blackmail "when a man under a sense of wrong crucifies his flesh?"[60] Coercion means using "harmful force . . . *against* a person who is expected to do something desired by the user of the force."[61] Force of self-suffering "cannot be put in the same category as the force of suffering caused to the party sought to be influenced. If I fast in order to awaken the conscience of an erring friend whose error is beyond question, I am not coercing him in the ordinary sense of the word."[62] While, therefore, it is possible that like any other powerful weapon fasting may be put to a wrong use, Gandhiji maintained that "as a great weapon in the armoury of Satyagraha, it cannot be given up because of its possible abuse."[63]

Fasting is a fiery weapon. "It has its own science."[64] So far as he was aware, said Gandhiji, no-one had a perfect knowledge of it. Unscientific experimentation with it, therefore, was "bound to be harmful to the one who fasts, and it may even harm the cause espoused."[65]

Gandhiji has laid down certain rules which must be observed in fasting for Satyagraha. The more important of these may be enumerated as below:

1. A fast may be undertaken only by him who is "associated with the person against whom he fasts. The latter must be directly connected with the purpose for which the fast is being undertaken."[66]

2. Fasting presupposes that the person who launches on a fast has established a claim upon the love and consideration of those to whom his fast is addressed. It cannot be addressed to those who regard him as their enemy. He could not, for instance, said Gandhiji, fast against a General Dyer, "who not only does not love me but who regards

himself as my enemy."[67] Suppose a Government acts unjustly, and when we offer civil disobedience it chooses not to arrest us. We cannot retaliate by launching on a fast in such a case. "You invite penalty from him (the tyrant) for disobedience of his orders, but you cannot inflict on yourselves penalties when he refuses to punish and renders it impossible for you to disobey his orders so as to compel infliction of penalty."[68] Fasting in such a case becomes a "species of violence done to him".[69]

3. Satyagraha cannot be resorted to for "personal gain, but only for the good of others."[70] In a pure fast, there can be no room for "selfishness, anger, lack of faith, or impatience."[71] Fasting to be legitimate can only be resorted to "against a lover, not to extort rights, but to reform him"[72] as when a son fasts for a father who drinks. When a fast is undertaken for a selfish object or for gaining an unworthy end, it becomes "intimidation and blackmail."[73] Such, for instance, would be fasting to wring money from a person or even to recover a debt. And since the dividing line between selfish and unselfish is often thin, Gandhiji urges that it should be the duty of a person, who regards the end of a fast to be selfish or otherwise base, to "resolutely refuse to yield to it, even though the refusal may result in the death of the fasting person."[74] If people cultivated the habit of disregarding fasts which in their opinion were undertaken for unworthy ends, such fasts would be "robbed of the taint of coercion and undue influence."[75]

4. Fasting is a "Satyagrahi's ultimate weapon."[76] It must, therefore, be used only as a last resort, when there is a clear inner call and "when all other avenues of redress have been explored and have failed."[77] Fasting is not for everyone and for every occasion. The right to it does not accrue to the lazy, the wooden minded, the undiscerning, or the spiritually undisciplined, but only to him who has thoroughly qualified himself for it by the practice of the various cardinal spiritual disciplines and proved his sincerity and earnestness by his strenuous labours to serve the cause for which he is out to suffer.

5. Fasting without faith can lead to disastrous consequences. "In addition to truth and non-violence a Satyagrahi should have the confidence that God will grant him the necessary strength and that, if there is the slightest impurity in the fast, he will not hesitate to renounce it at once. Infinite patience, firm resolve, single-mindedness of purpose, perfect calm and no anger must of necessity be there."[78] But since it is impossible for a person to develop all these qualities all at once, no-one, said Gandhiji, "who has not devoted himself to following the laws of Ahimsa, should undertake a Satyagrahi fast."[79]

6. The object of the fast should be clear, definite, intelligible and feasible. One has to be identified with it.

7. In a spiritual venture there can be no room for bargaining. In Satyagraha, therefore, "the minimum is also the maximum." Pro-

longation of the fast out of anger, obstinacy, or pride, or owing to the intoxication of success after the minimum conditions have been fulfilled, can be as detrimental to its success as its premature termination, as a result of weakness, lack of judgment or of intelligence (see Vol. I, page 513).

8. The qualifications for undertaking a fast as Satyagraha include a knowledge of the rules for conserving one's energy and physical and mental fitness while fasting.[80] Since God and His law are one, Gandhiji held that a knowledge and observance of the laws of nature relating to the necessary care and upkeep of the "earthly tabernacle" should become second nature to one who is filled with His spirit.

9. The terms of the fast can be varied according to the nature and physical condition of each individual, the object of the fast, the varying circumstances, or any unforeseen emergencies that may develop during the fast. For instance, Gandhiji as a rule took nothing but water with or without soda-bicarb and salt during his fasts. But owing to an allergy to plain water especially while fasting, which he had developed after his fourteen days' fast in South Africa, he sometimes allowed himself to add the juice of sour and/or sweet limes to make the water drinkable. During his twenty-one day fast for Hindu-Muslim unity in 1924, he allowed a glucose enema to be administered to him when very alarming symptoms manifested themselves. The fast was undertaken by him to make penance, not to put an end to his life, he explained. And since it was of an indeterminate duration, 21 days being "the least" that he had vowed himself to undergo, and was intended to be prolonged beyond that period "if necessary", the addition of glucose to the enemas made no difference either in terms of the ultimate risk of possible death as a result of fasting, or the crucifixion of the spirit which a fast of such a character involves.

10. Fasting is the "logical outcome of a prayerful search after truth". A Satyagrahi will therefore, not feel disheartened or count his Satyagraha as failure if his fast does not yield the expected result. He will be content "silently and heroically" to perish in the attempt "to win an answer from a deaf God" without his faith in God and non-violence being in the slightest degree diminished. As Gandhiji often said: "God does not always answer prayers in the manner we want Him to. For Him life and death are one, and who is able to deny that all that is pure and good in the world persists because of the silent death of thousands of unknown heroes and heroines?"[81]

Gandhiji's fasts were undertaken in obedience to what he called "the inner voice". When all is said and done, may not such a fast, it may be asked, be the result of "hallucination" as likely as it may be that of illumination? There is every such possibility, Gandhiji warns, and one cannot too strictly guard himself against it.

What is the "inner voice"? It is the voice of "God which is truth",

the voice of purified reason, instinct, conscience. Its whispering is heard in every heart but not everybody possesses the faculty of listening to it. There are some rules laid down for acquiring this faculty. "Those who would make individual search after truth as God, must go through several vows, as for instance, the vow of Truth, the vow of Brahmacharya (chastity)—for you cannot possibly divide your love for truth and God with anything else—the vow of non-violence, of poverty and non-possession. Unless you impose on yourselves the five vows, you may not embark on the experiment at all."[82]

But while he could lay down rules the observance of which is essential for proper listening, said Gandhiji, the Reality, still escaped him.[83] What is the way of knowing the true from the false then? Unfortunately there is none "except through results. God will not be God if He allowed Himself to be an object of proof by His creatures. But He does give His willing slave the power to pass through the fieriest of ordeals."[84] In his own case, "having made a ceaseless effort to attain self-purification", he claimed that he had developed "some little capacity to hear correctly and clearly the 'still small voice within'."[85]

Hearing the "inner voice" is a class of experience by itself. The "inner voice defies description."[86] In the final test it is its own seal and sanction. "Sometimes we . . . feel that we receive an inspiration from within."[87] "There come to us moments in life when we need no proof from without. A little voice within us tells us: 'You are on the right track, move neither to your left nor to your right, but keep to the strait and narrow way'."[88] There are moments when "you must act, even though you cannot carry your best friends with you,"[89] and even in defiance of the whole world. If a man has "really" heard the Voice of God, there is for him "no sliding back, just as there is no forgetting it by one who has learnt to swim."[90]

Since God is formless, hearing His voice is something quite different from physical hearing. Gandhiji has, however, vividly described one occasion when he did hear a "voice". He was in prison in 1932. He had pledged himself to the removal of untouchability root and branch at the end of the Yeravda Fast (The Epic Fast) which had resulted in the reversal of the British Cabinet's decision in regard to the introduction of separate electorate for the Harijans, in the 1935 constitution for the Government of India which was then in the making. He had been allowed to edit from prison the weekly *Harijan* devoted solely to the Harijan cause. Later the permission was withdrawn. Gandhiji was faced with the prospect of being unable to implement the solemn pledge he had given to the Harijans in regard to purging Hinduism of the taint of untouchability. "A tempest has been raging within me for some days. I have been struggling against it. On the eve of the 'Harijan Day', the Voice became insistent, and said: 'Why don't you do it?' I resisted it. But the resistance was vain."[91] "I saw

no form," he records. "I have never tried, for I have always believed God to be without form. But what I did hear was like a voice from afar and yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time I heard the Voice. The hearing of the Voice was preceded by a terrific struggle within me. Suddenly the Voice came upon me. I listened, made certain that it was the Voice, and the struggle ceased. I was calm. The determination was made accordingly, the date and the hour of the fast were fixed. Joy came over me. This was between 11 and 12 midnight. I felt refreshed and began to write the note about it which the reader must have seen."[92]

Here is another description by himself of the same experience: "On retiring to bed the previous night I had no notion that I was going to announce the next morning a fast of 21 days. But in the middle of the night a Voice woke me up and said: 'Go through a fast.' 'How many days?' I asked. 'Twenty-one days' was the answer. Now let me tell you that my mind was unprepared for it, disinclined for it. But the thing came to me as clearly as anything could be."[93]

There were other occasions, however, when no such voice was heard. "Take the Dandi Salt March of 1930. I had not the ghost of a suspicion how the breach of the Salt Law would work itself out. . . . Friends were fretting and did not know what I would do; and I could tell them nothing, as I myself knew nothing about it. But like a flash it came, and, as you know, it was enough to shake the country from one end to the other."[94]

Yet another occasion was when he proclaimed the 6th of April, 1919, as an all-India day for "fasting and prayer" in protest against the repressive Rowlatt Act legislation. It launched India into the Civil Disobedience era. "Until the last day, I knew nothing about announcing the 6th of April 1919 as a day of fasting and prayer. But I dreamt about it—there was no Voice or Vision as in 1930—and I felt it was just the thing to do. In the morning, I . . . announced it to the country, you know with what a wonderfully spontaneous response."[95]

The one thing that was common to all these occasions was that it was instinct rather than reason that prompted him. The time when he learnt to recognise the "inner voice", he has recorded, was about 1906. "It may be called my prayer time."[96] But even then it did not come to him as a "special revelation of God's will" or as a sudden, abnormal experience.

The "voice", Gandhiji testified later, became "increasingly audible as the years . . . rolled by."[97] But while as a humble truth seeker he never ruled out the possibility that he might have been deluded or self-deceived, he affirmed for what a mere mortal's affirmation can be worth that his instinct had "not betrayed me even once."[98]

During the week following the termination of Gandhiji's fast in Delhi in January 1948, Vincent Sheean asked him: How was the Mahatma certain that it was "the inner voice" that spoke to him, whereas there were others who had inner voices and were not sure?

Gandhiji answered that every reason was against it but the "law which was above all reason commanded it against reason." When that happened, to him it was a certainty that it was the command of the "living law within" which may not be gainsaid.

"Does the certainty precede renunciation?" Gandhiji's visitor again asked. In other words was his surrender to the inner voice rooted in the certainty that it was the voice of God? To this Gandhiji replied: "No, the renunciation precedes the certainty." It was only after and because he had surrendered himself completely to the spirit of Truth which is God and ceased to have a separate will of his own, or to put it differently, when he had reduced himself to "zero" that he arrived at the certainty that the voice that he heard was not an echo of his "elongated self" but the voice of God.

With all its limitations, therefore, said Gandhiji, Satyagraha by "fasting unto death" was not capable of much abuse. "It is such an agonising process that ordinary human nature shudders at the very thought of having to undergo it."[99] There is not much danger of its becoming popular, therefore, or anybody thoughtlessly taking the plunge or persisting in it for long. As for hypocrisy, unfortunately there is no remedy against it. "But virtue must not be suppressed because many will feign it."[100] And in any case not much harm can result from the misguided activities of a few impostors or self-deluded persons. "The world cannot be successfully fooled for all time." Of all methods of exerting pressure, therefore, fasting "is the one thing that does the least harm."

CHAPTER XXIV

ONE PERFECT ACT

> Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
>
> *St John* XV, 26

1

ONCE MORE the battleship had gone into action and come out with the colours unlowered and unsoiled but with the hull this time badly damaged. In a letter to a close Ashram associate a few days later Gandhiji wrote: "My strength is fairly returning but the kidney and the liver seem to have been damaged this time. In my opinion this indicates a flaw in my faith and in my practice of Ramanama."[1]

The damage to the kindey was partly an aftermath of the Calcutta fast. But he had come out of such experiences and upset textbook medical theories often enough before. Thanks to his regular habits, abstemious living, self-discipline, detachment and poise, his system still retained its ample recuperative powers; the body was extremely well preserved, wiry and resilient; the various faculties and organs intact and functioning to perfection. There was absolute command over sleep. "When I lose command over sleep," he used to say, "I shall be finished. It will be a sign not merely of physical decay but of the deterioration of the spirit as well. All deterioration begins with the spirit, next affects the body and finally one's environment." Memory betrayed at times signs of flagging but the mind was razor-sharp, vigorous and quick; the judgment uncannily sure, and the intuitions, if any thing, more unerring than ever. For his years he still could put in an amazing amount of physical and sustained, concentrated mental work. He was at the height of his spiritual powers. Never had his prestige at home and abroad stood higher.

What would he do next? Go to Pakistan and repeat there the "miracle" of Calcutta and Delhi? He had said something about his going to Kashmir, if he was successful in Delhi, to see what non-violence of his conception could do there.

The attainment of independence by non-violence had made India the centre of attention of all the peoples of Asia and Africa

struggling for their rights. It seemed the time of which he had spoken at the Asian Relations Conference ten months earlier, when an awakened and united Asia would redeliver to the world the timeless message of the East, had at last arrived. "The future of the world is dark," he had said to some Chinese visitors sometime before the fast, "if Asia fails to give the light. There should be complete unity of hearts among all Asian countries." It would bode ill for the future of civilisation and the peace of the world, he had said, if Asia allowed itself to be swept off its feet and took after the manner of the West.

Would he now turn his attention to the broader scene? It all depended on what account independent India could give of herself. He had always said that his teaching had to make good in India before it could be presented to the world. He had just begun to set democracy on the march in India, not democracy as it is practised in the West but true democracy of his conception in which "the weakest is equal to the strongest".

The battle of decontrol was as yet but half won. The control organisation had become a gigantic vested interest. He had once said that he would like to undertake a tour all over India "to stop the plunder of the growers by the cities", to educate the masses in their rights and duties as citizens of free India, and to call upon the national leaders to fulfil pledges which they had given when they were engaged in the struggle for freedom. Then, he had been emphasising the need to organise the youth and prepare them to shoulder the new tasks "just as at the beginning of the non-cooperation movement, we invited them to join the freedom struggle." He had hinted that this might be one of his post-independence activities. The way India had been going since independence had made him extremely unhappy. "What would you take up next, now that India is free?" he was asked by a member of his party some time after independence. "To reform the politics of the country and purify it," he replied. In 1930, he had written: "I know that if I survive the struggle for freedom, I might have to give non-violent battles to my own countrymen which may be as stubborn as that in which I am now engaged." Even in the evening of his life he was quite capable of launching upon one more struggle. To the average person struggle is only a means to an end. In his case it was means as well as end. Even the most seasoned of campaigners may at times feel weary and footsore; after his victories long to rest on his laurels; not he. Life with him was an unending duel, a ceaseless quest. He, more than anyone else we know of, always gave one the feeling that "the best is yet to be." His "best" in the present case, however, was destined to be realised in a way undreamt of by anyone.

Two days after the breaking of the fast, on the 20th January,

1948, while Gandhiji was delivering his post-prayer address, there was a loud explosion. It caused a mild commotion in the gathering. In an impassioned voice that can still be heard with the thud of the explosion on the sound track of the All-India Radio, Gandhiji rebuked the congregation for being panicked. "If we get panicked like this over nothing, what shall be our plight if something really happens? . . . Listen! Listen! Listen everybody . . . nothing has happened. . . . " (a short, pained laugh and silence). After a little while order was restored. It was then found that a bomb had been exploded about 75 feet away from where Gandhiji was sitting and a portion of the wall had been demolished as a result. The assailant, a youth of about 25 years, was a refugee from West Punjab, Madanlal Pahwa by name. He was arrested and hand-cuffed. On being searched, a hand-grenade was found on his person. He appeared to be unrepentant.

Congratulations poured in from every quarter on Gandhiji's escape. But Hariram, G.D. Birla's servant, who used to attend on Gandhiji in Birla House (see Vol. I, page 497), reflecting the mood of the man-in-the-street, maintained that all that was irrelevant. The Mahatma being the incarnation of God Himself, how could anybody kill him! So incredible it seemed to everybody.

When he first heard the noise of the explosion, Gandhiji explained next day at his prayer meeting, he thought it was the military carrying on their routine target practice. He had not realised till after the prayer that it was a bomb explosion and that the bomb was meant for him. Who could say, he asked, how he would have behaved if he had known that the bomb was meant for him and if it had exploded in front of him? He therefore deserved no praise. He would deserve a certificate only if he fell as a result of such an explosion and yet retained a smile on his face without malice against the assailant. No-one should look down upon or harbour anger or resentment against the misguided youth, who had thrown the bomb. The young man probably looked upon him as an enemy of Hinduism and regarded himself as an instrument sent by God for his removal. No-one was so perfect, he went on to observe, as to be justified in regarding himself as the chosen instrument of God for the punishment of evil-doers as the youth in the present case seemed to have done. Nor was anyone who differed from them necessarily evil. They should pity the youth and search their own hearts. If having taken the pledge to maintain peace to save his life, they still harboured resentment against his fast, theirs was the guilt, not that of the young man who had thrown the bomb. If, on the other hand, they had signed the peace pledge whole-heartedly, even persons like the young man were bound ultimately to come round to their way of thinking. He could not ask the police to let off the culprit. "I might have done

that also if the culprit had realised that he had by his action ill-served Hinduism, Islam, India and the whole world, and felt genuinely repentant." As things stood, any such interference on his part would have only embarrassed the authorities and made their task of preserving law and order, difficult as it already was, more difficult. He appealed to the police not to harass the young man. They should try to win him over and convert him to right thinking and doing. The lesson for the audience was that they should in future be able to go on with the prayers in spite of "not one but any number of such bomb explosions or even a shower of bullets." He appealed to those who were at the back of the youth not to persist in their misguided course. That was not the way to save Hindusim.

It was reported to Gandhiji that one of his co-workers had asked whether he had not, by referring to the bomb explosion as an attempt on his life, while the matter was *sub judice*, prejudged the issue and prejudiced the trial. For anything they knew, the whole matter might turn out to be a harmless prank of an irresponsible youth. Gandhiji laughed and exclaimed, "The fool! Don't you see, there is a terrible and widespread conspiracy behind it?"

The story of the plot that came to light later, and of which the bomb explosion at Birla House was a part, revealed that the brains behind the conspiracy was one Nathuram Vinayak Godse (see Vol. I, page 86), the editor of *Hindu Rashtra* of Poona, and its manager Narayan D. Apte. They were joined at various stages by Digamber D. Badge, who was running an arms shop in Poona; Gopal Godse, the brother of Nathuram Godse; Karkare, Madanlal and some others. All of them except Madanlal were from Maharashtra and members of the Hindu Mahasabha or of the R. S. S.

Maharashtra has a strong tradition of militant Hindu nationalism. It is the citadel of Brahmin orthodoxy of a most exclusive and rigid type. In self-dedication, patriotism, sacrifice and renunciation, it has produced exemplars which it would be difficult to excel. But its idealism has very often been mixed with a rugged pragmatism and cynical view of life and politics which was diametrically opposed to that of Gandhiji. Some of the proponents of this outlook had somehow come to feel, quite unwarrantably, that the rise of Gandhiji's philosophy was the cause of the memory of that great leader of Maharashtra, the late Lokamanya Tilak and the premier position that Maharashtra held in the country's politics during his lifetime, being eclipsed. They regarded Gandhiji's political leadership and movement of non-violence with a strong, concentrated feeling of antipathy and frustration which found expression in a sustained campaign of calumny against Gandhiji for over a quarter of a century. The fact that in spite of it a growing section in Maharashtra rallied to Gandhiji's movement further exasperated them and deepened their

sense of frustration. It was this section that had tried to bomb Gandhiji in 1934 at Poona while he was engaged in his anti-untouchability campaign. Their plans this time were far more systematic and thorough, and included such refinements as conditioning the minds of the youth for their prospective task by making them wear, as a part of their training, photos of Congress leaders like Pandit Nehru and others besides Gandhiji inside their shoes, and using the same for target practice with fire-arms etc.

Angered by Gandhiji's peace mission in Delhi, this group decided to remove him from the scene. Gandhiji's fast and subsequent release by the Indian Government of 55 crores to Pakistan enraged them still further. On top of it, atrocity stories and tales of unimaginable crimes against Hindu womanhood kept pouring in from Kashmir. Popular sentiment was systematically worked up by deliberately concocted propaganda. One day a highly excited group of young men came to Birla House with a photograph of what was supposed to be a procession of abducted Hindu women of Kashmir, stripped naked, being led through a city. The picture was clearly a fake. But such things served to arouse passions to a dangerous pitch. Unfortunately, what the Pakistan-backed raiders had actually done in Kashmir was worse than any invention could make it. The fact that there was every possibility of the cash balance that was paid to Pakistan being used in Pakistan's fight against India in Kashmir added fuel to the fire. A vast net-work of an organisation under the direct encouragement, direction and control of the R.S.S. had grown up with the object of planning and carrying out pogroms against Muslims as a part of the cruel war of brutality and counter-brutality, reprisals and counter-reprisals preceding and following the partition, when a large number of people had completely lost their heads and become for the time being fiends in human form. Their activities included collection and distribution of arms and ammunition. It had given rise to a formidable, illicit arms traffic. A vast chain of big and small agencies had in consequence sprung all over the country to take advantage of the increasing demand for arms which enabled profits to be combined with patriotism.

The vast mass of bedraggled, uprooted humanity that had poured over the border, despairing, unhinged and demented as a result of what they had suffered, provided to these organisations a fruitful recruiting ground for agents to carry out their ruthless campaign. Madanlal Pahwa, who had exploded the bomb at the prayer ground, was one such. He had illegally occupied a mosque in Delhi on the alleged ground that he could find no other accommodation. When the police began to get all such mosques vacated, he resented it. At Ahmednagar, near Poona, where he was serving as a sort of a shop assistant to Karkare, a fellow conspirator, he had distinguished

himself by assaulting in a public meeting a Congress speaker while he was speaking on communal unity.

On the 10th January, 1948, Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte asked Badge, the owner of the arms shop, to supply them with two gun-cotton slabs, two revolvers and five hand-grenades. Badge said he had no revolvers. He was thereupon asked to deliver the gun-cotton slabs and hand-grenades at Bombay where the price would be paid to him.

Nathuram Godse effected nominations on his two life policies —one on the 13th January, in favour of the wife of Apte, and the other, on the 14th January, in favour of the wife of his brother Gopal Godse. Each of these nominations was witnessed by Apte.

Badge with his servant Shankar Kistayya came to Bombay on 14th January for delivering the arms. Here they met Apte and Godse, and delivered two gun-cotton slabs and five hand-grenades. They then all went to the house of one Dixit Maharaj, younger brother of Dada Maharaj, the religious head of the Pushti Marga Vaishnava sect, in Bombay. Dixit and Dada had been dealing in arms, ammunition and explosives for use in Hyderabad State in the struggle against the Razakar terrorist campaign. Leaving the bag containing the "stuff" in Dixit Maharaj's house, at Bhuleshwar (Bombay), they returned to the Hindu Mahasabha office.

On the 15th January Apte booked, under assumed names, two passages for himself and Nathuram Godse for 17th January by plane from Bombay to Delhi. On the same day Apte, Nathuram Godse, Badge, Karkare and Madanlal went to Dixit Maharaj's house. The bag that had been left there on the previous day was sent for and examined, and a small council of war was held. Karkare and Madanlal were then asked by Apte to take the "stuff" and leave for Delhi the same night by train. Apte told Dixit Maharaj that they were going on some important mission for which they needed a revolver or two. Dixit Maharaj said that he had no revolvers. He owned a pistol but he was not prepared to part with it. Apte pressed Dixit Maharaj to obtain a revolver for him no matter how.

On coming out of Dixit Maharaj's house, Apte asked Badge if he was prepared to go with them to Delhi. Badge agreed. Apte was further reported to have stated that V.D. Savarkar, the Hindu Mahasabha leader, had told him that it had been decided that Gandhiji, Pandit Nehru and Suhrawardy should be done away with, and had entrusted them with that mission.

On the 17th January, according to Badge, Nathuram Godse went to have a last *darshan* of Savarkar at Bombay. While Badge and Shankar waited outside, Nathuram and Apte went in. On coming out, Apte told Badge that Savarker had said to them, "*Yashasvi houn ya* —be successful and return." Apte was further reported to have said:

"*Tatyaravani ase bhavishya kele ahe ki Gandhijichi shmbhar vershe bharali, ata, apale kam nishchita honar yat kahi sanshaya nahi*—Tatyarao Savarkar has predicted that Gandhiji's hundred years are over; there is, therefore, no doubt that our mission will be successful."

Godse and Apte again went to Dixit Maharaj on the 17th noon, and asked for a revolver. Dixit Maharaj produced a pistol but refused to hand it over to them unless he received the money first. Apte said Dada Maharaj had promised him a revolver and therefore he should hand over the pistol in question to him. Dixit Maharaj however persisted in his refusal.

Godse and Apte then flew to Delhi under assumed names. At Santa Cruz aerodrome (Bombay) Apte gave three hundred rupees to Badge and asked him to proceed to Delhi by train. On arriving at Delhi Godse and Apte stayed at Marina Hotel, in Connaught Circus, under assumed names of S. Deshpande and M. Deshpande respectively. Madanlal and Karkare, who had left according to plan for Delhi on the 15th night by train, reached Delhi on the 17th January. They put up at Sharif Hotel, where Karkare gave a false name. Badge and Shankar arrived at Delhi on the 19th January and went to Hindu Mahasabha Bhavan, where they put up in a room in which Madanlal and Gopal Godse were already staying.

On the 20th January morning, Apte asked Badge and Shankar to go with him to Birla House. They got down at the main entrance of Birla House. Here they were stopped by the gate-keeper. They told the gate-keeper that they wanted to see "the secretary" and gave him a note to be sent in. Meanwhile a man came out of Birla House. Apte pointed him out to Badge and said he was Suhrawardy. They then went behind Birla House. Apte pointed out to Badge the place where Gandhiji held his evening prayers and took measurements of the openings in the carved red sand-stone trellis-work in the wall at the back of the pavillion where Gandhiji used to sit at the prayer meeting. Through that opening, he told Badge, a revolver could be fired, or a hand-grenade hurled from the servant's room at the back of Birla House. He also showed Badge the place where a guncotton slab was to be exploded to divert the attention of the people collected at the prayer ground.

On returning to Hindu Mahasabha Bhavan, Apte, Gopal Godse, Badge and Shankar went to the jungle behind the Hindu Mahasabha Bhavan to try a pistol. This was at about 11 a.m. Mehar Singh, a forest guard under the Central Public Works Department with two other forest guards, was on the beat. Coming upon them about three furlongs behind the Hindu Mahasabha Bhavan, he asked them why they were loitering there. They replied they were tourists and were having a stroll. Later on all of them came to room No. 40

in the Marina Hotel. Nathuram Godse was there lying in bed. They fixed primers to the guncotton slabs and detonators to the hand-grenades, and distributed the "stuff" among themselves. Their plan was that as soon as Nathuram Godse and Apte gave the signal during the prayer, Madanlal would explode the guncotton slab and Badge would throw the hand-grenade at Gandhiji through the trellis work of the window in the rear. In the confusion following the explosions they would then make good their escape.

Accordingly at about 4 p.m. they took a taxi from a taxi-stand near Regal Cinema in Connaught Circus. They first went to Hindu Mahasabha Bhavan and from there to Birla House. The taxi was taken to the back of Birla House behind the prayer ground. Chhoturam, the car-cleaner of Birla House, happened to be sitting in front of his room behind the prayer ground. One of the group came to him and told him that he wanted to "take a photograph" of Gandhiji sitting at prayer through the trellis-work in his room, and offered some money. But Chhoturam refused to allow him inside his room.

The plan of the conspirators, as a result, underwent a change. They decided to mix with the crowd at the prayer ground. Following upon the confusion caused by the explosion of the guncotton slab by Madanlal they would make a rush at the dais and Badge would throw the hand-grenade at Gandhiji. But at the last moment Badge's courage failed him with the result that when Madanlal exploded the guncotton slab, he found that nothing further happened. The other conspirators, thereupon, hurriedly made for the waiting taxi and, without waiting for Madanlal, asked the driver to start. The driver started the car and dropped them at Connaught Circus.

Madanlal could not make good his escape. Sulochana Devi, a poor, illiterate woman, had seen him lighting something with a match and sparks coming out of the fuse attached to the bomb. She pointed him out to the people who had collected there after the explosion as the person who had placed the bomb there and had lighted it. He was secured and handed over to the police.

On returning to the Hindu Mahasabha Bhavan, Badge asked Shankar to throw away the two hand-grenades in the jungle behind the Bhavan. They then left for Poona. Nathuram Godse and Apte left the same evening for Kanpur. Karkare and Gopal Godse stayed for the night in the Frontier Hindu Hotel and left Delhi on the following day.

From Kanpur, Apte and Nathuram Godse reached Bombay on the 23rd January. They put up together in Arya Pathik Ashram under assumed names. From there they shifted to Elphinstone Hotel Annexe on the 25th January, and reserved two seats by plane for Delhi for 27th January, using aliases all along.

On the 26th January, Nathuram Godse and Apte went to Dixit Maharaj in the morning and again pressed him for a revolver. They said a revolver was needed as it was unsafe to travel without one beyond Delhi. Dixit Maharaj however was a shrewd man. Reminding them of what they had told him previously, viz. that they had collected arms and ammunition worth about thirty thousand rupees and were going to Kashmir where the arms dump was needed for use against the raiders, he asked them how they had managed to return from Kashmir so soon. They answered that they had despatched only half of the "stuff" beyond Delhi and had come back to arrange for the despatch of the remaining half. Dixit Maharaj, however, said, he could not help them in the matter of a revolver. But they insisted that he procure one for them by evening. They showed him a revolver that they had and said they wanted another. But Dixit Maharaj did not help.

On the 27th January, Nathuram Godse and Apte left by plane for Delhi. From there they went to Gwalior and put up with one Dr. Parchure who owned a pistol. Here they also met one Gangadhar S. Dandwate and asked him to arrange for a pistol for them. Dandwate suggested to Dr. Parchure that he should hand over to them his own pistol. But Dr. Parchure refused point blank saying he was not such a fool as to hand over to them his pistol which might later be identified by the police. Dandwate thereupon promised to procure for them a revolver before evening and went to one Jagadish Prasad Goyel, and told him that a pistol was needed. Could he sell his pistol to him for a sum of rupees five hundred? Jagadish Prasad readily agreed and handed over his pistol with seven rounds of ammunition. Godse and Apte then returned to Delhi with the pistol. They put up in the retiring room at the Delhi railway station. On the morning of the 30th January, the normal time limit for which the use of retiring room is allowed being over, they were asked by the station authorities to vacate the retiring room. They accordingly removed their bedding from the retiring room and shifted to men's first-class waiting room.

2

After the bomb explosion at Birla House on the 20th January, 1948, one Jagdish Chandra Jain, professor in Ramnarain Ruia College in Bombay, contacted the Chief Minister of Bombay, B.G. Kher, and informed him that he had been helping Madanlal in various ways as a refugee in need. From him he had learnt that there was a conspiracy afoot to assassinate Gandhiji. He also gave to B.G. Kher the names of some of the conspirators and some other details. The Bombay Government passed on the information to Sardar Patel, who was the Minister for Home Affairs in the Union Government, and also to Gandhiji.

Acting on the information received from Bombay, Sardar Patel wanted to tighten up security measures and told Gandhiji that he wanted the police to search every person coming to his prayer meetings. But Gandhiji absolutely refused to agree to it or to the police being present in the prayer meetings. His faith did not allow him to put himself under any kind of human protection at the prayer time, he said, when he had put himself under the sole protection of God. It would reduce his profession of faith to a mockery if he gave consent to any proposal for his protection such as the Sardar had mentioned. Finding him adamant, the Sardar resigned himself to whatever Providence might have in store. What, however, surprises one is that in spite of the definite and concrete information of which the authorities were in possession, they should have failed to trace and arrest the conspirators and frustrate their plan. The failure was an index of the extent of the rot that had permeated many branches of the services, not excluding the police. In fact, later it was brought to light that the R.S.S. organisation had ramifications even in Government departments, and many police officials, not to mention the rank and file, gave their sympathy and even active help to those engaged in R.S.S. activities. Even before the bomb explosion, some of the refugee camps in Delhi were known to be buzzing with loose talk about the assassination of Gandhiji and other Congress leaders who enjoyed the reputation of being opposed to communalistic ideologies. A letter which Sardar Patel received after the assassination from a young man, who according to his own statement had been gulled into joining the R.S.S. organisation but was later disillusioned, described how members of the R.S.S. at some places had been instructed beforehand to tune in their radio sets on the fateful Friday for the "good news". After the news, sweets were distributed in R.S.S. circles at several places, including Delhi. When the R.S.S. was later banned by an order of the Government, the local police chief in one of the Indian States, according to the Sardar's correspondent, sent word to the organisers to close their office "for thirteen days" as a sign of mourning, and disperse but not to disband. The rot was so insidious and widespread that only the supreme sacrifice could arrest or remove it.

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Gandhiji's convalescence after the fast ran a smooth, uneventful course. On the 22nd January, he was able for the first time to walk to the prayer meeting. He lost no time in taking up the loose ends of the various problems that he had been tackling before he launched upon the fast. They were recovery of the abducted women in both the Dominions to the tune of several thousands, the treatment of the Hindu population of Sind and the evacuation of those who wanted to come away. There had been bad news from Bahawal-

pur State, too, where a large number of non-Muslims were awaiting to be evacuated to India. In a letter to Gandhiji, full of lofty sentiments and professions of regard for him, the Nawab maintained that they were all right where they were, if only "communalist busybodies" would let them alone. But Gandhiji felt uneasy. The reports that had reached him from independent sources were to the contrary. He sent two of his trusted workers to go there and report.

Gandhiji to Nawab of Bahawalpur 23rd January, 1948

The latest is to the effect that about 500 people have died of illness brought about by exposure and partial starvation and 1,100 were lying ill. . . .I have decided, therefore, to send to your State Mr. Leslie Cross of the Friends Service Unit to be assisted by Dr. Sushila Nayar . . . who, when she was yet a child . . . came under my care and has been with me ever since and is now, among other things, serving Muslim evacuees. . . . They are going to your State in the hope of meeting you and meeting such non-Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, whom they may be permitted to see and bring me first-hand information. . . .

Nothing would please me better than to be able to testify personally that things are as happy as they are described in your letter under reply and that I can advise the refugees from your State to return with perfect confidence as to the safety of their lives, honour and faith. I am not inclined to favour the view suggested by you that all these people left under a plot to discredit the State. If you are not confident that these unhappy refugees can return to their homes and resume their former avocations, I know you will not hesitate to say so and in that case I would suggest your sending away, at least for the present, all your Hindu and Sikh subjects including Harijans, to the Union under proper escort. The chief question to consider is whether the Muslims of the State and the Muslim refugees have come under the purificatory influence of the recent fast, so as to welcome back their Hindu and Sikh brothers and sisters.

In the meantime two Parsi friends, who had on their own been trying to explore avenues to peace and goodwill between the two Dominions, had returned from Karachi on the 19th January after a series of talks with the Pakistan authorities. The substance of the proposition which they had discussed with Ghulam Mohammad, the Finance Minister of Pakistan, and brought with them was that Gandhiji and Jinnah should meet and settle all outstanding issues between the two Dominions including Kashmir, with the help of an umpire if necessary. To that end both should be given necessary

powers by the respective Cabinets of the two Dominions. Jinnah, however, while he seemed personally not to be averse to this proposition, asked his Finance Minister to consult the other members of the Cabinet who were in Karachi, and the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, who was at that time in Peshawar, as he said he was anxious to act in a "strictly constitutional" way.

The proposal was again discussed in the course of a second talk in which, besides the Finance Minister, three other members of the Pakistan Cabinet participated. The formula that was ultimately evolved was that the Prime Ministers of the two Dominions should try to settle all issues including Kashmir; the adjudication of responsibility for disturbances in the two Dominions; evolving of a common formula for the protection of life, property, honour, culture and dignity of the minorities; or any other matter affecting good relations between the two Dominions that their Prime Minister might think fit. In case of difference Gandhiji and Jinnah should come into the picture and whatever decision they might give, the Prime Ministers of the two Dominions should agree to accept and implement. Ghulam Mohammad however desired "to leave it to both Premiers what further to do in case they differed." Finally, it was proposed that if the formula as a whole was accepted by both sides, the United Nations Organisation would be asked temporarily to suspend the discussions that were going on there on the matters referred to them by India.

This was as dismal and disappointing a sequel as could be. But Gandhiji had acted often enough before under even more unpromising circumstances without being discouraged. The Parsi friends from Karachi argued that if he went to Pakistan, it would put heart into the minority community there. Gandhiji, too, felt that having done his bit for the minority community in the Indian Union he must now do the same for the minority community in Pakistan for which the way had now been set clear for him. The Delhi Muslims pressed the view that if the Hindus in the Indian Union knew that Gandhiji was going to Pakistan to help the minority community there, it would give impetus to the implementation of the peace effort that had been launched in Delhi.

After considering the various pros and cons, Gandhiji finally told the two Parsi friends that he would go to Pakistan if the Pakistan authorities invited him. To Sind he would go on the invitation of the Chief Minister of Sind, who was known to be desirous of his visit there. He would go to Karachi first, then to the Frontier Province. After meeting the Khan Brothers and the Khudai Khidmatgars, he would finally go to Lahore. Something within him kept telling him that if he went to Pakistan and let the Muslim masses see in his face and in his eyes and in his whole being the love that made no distinction between Hindu and Muslim and which had made him offer his life

as ransom to make the Indian Union safe for Muslims it might bring home to them the error and futility of divisiveness and, if it pleased God, He might use him to perform yet another miracle of conversion such as Calcutta and Delhi had witnessed. A Muslim leader from Pakistan came and told him that he looked forward to witnessing a fifty-mile long procession of Hindus and Sikhs returning to Pakistan with Gandhiji at its head. In the case of Gandhiji such a possibility could by no means be ruled out. It could well have proved to be his crowning achievement, surpassing all his previous "miracles" just as each succeeding "miracle" that he had wrought before had outdone the preceding one. He had been working towards that end by his uncompromising insistence on its counterpart, viz. the return and rehabilitation of the displaced Indian Muslims in their original homes. The tide of history would have then—at least so far as India was concerned—run a different course. And who can tell, with what results? The prospect thrilled Gandhiji.

The members of the Bajaj family were very keen on having Gandhiji at Wardha on the forthcoming death anniversary of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, his "fifth son". His visit to Sevagram Ashram also was overdue. On the afternoon of the 25th January, he discussed the question with the leaders of the Delhi Muslims. They said, they would visit the Muslim quarters of the city the next day, the 26th January, get the feel of the situation and then tell him. Gandhiji assured them that though it would give him great satisfaction to be able to go to Sevagram, he would not go there without their permission. They must not feel he had left them in the lurch.

The *Harijan* weeklies were being published by Gandhiji in four languages—English, Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu. In running these papers he had always adhered to the principle that they must be able to pay their way without any artificial props in the form of a subsidy, advertisements etc. Lack of sufficient public support would be an indication that they were not answering a felt need. The sales of the Urdu edition had steadily been going down. Gandhiji interpreted this as a sign of Hindu resentment against its publication. "I would be foolish if I failed to profit by it," he wrote in *Harijan*. "Those who in anger boycott the Urdu script put a wanton affront upon the Muslims of the Union who, in the eyes of many Hindus, have become aliens in their own land. This is copying the bad manners of Pakistan with a vengeance. I invite every inhabitant of India to join me in a stern refusal to copy bad manners."[2] To his Muslim friends his advice was that they should subscribe to the Urdu edition if they wanted it to be continued, and further learn the Nagari script. It would enrich their intellectual capital and bridge the gulf between them and their non-Muslim brethren of the Indian Union.

* * *

The last week of January, 1948, and the last in Gandhiji's life was crowded with momentous utterances. In one of them, for the last time, he denounced the craze for pomp and pegeantry that seemed to have seized them in the intoxication of their new-found independence. While the Congress was in the wilderness, he observed, it had set before the people the ideal of service, self-denial and simplicity. In those days it was difficult to collect even a lakh of rupees. Now the Congress Government was in charge of crores of rupees and could raise as much as it liked. Were they to spend it as if there was no change from foreign rule to indigenous rule? he asked. "Some people seem to think that India's leaders and ambassadors must live and spend money in a style befitting their independent status and vie with independent America and England in stylishness. They think that such expenditure is necessary in order to uphold India's prestige in foreign countries. I do not think so. Independence is not synonymous with stylishness or pomp. We have got to cut our coat according to our cloth. There is no merit in hiding our poverty. India's status in the world will depend upon her moral supremacy which her passive resistance has brought her. In this she has no rival as yet. Other nations, great or small, are proud of their armaments and military valour. That is their capital. India possesses only her moral capital which increases with the spending. On any other condition the Congress claim that it would revolutionise values when it came into power, would be forfeited." People criticised the Ministers, he continued, for accepting high salaries and not bringing the artificial British standard down to the natural Indian standard. "The fashion is for Congressmen and others to expect high emoluments wholly out of keeping with what they were making out of office." One who managed to live on Rs. 150 per month did not hesitate to demand and expect Rs. 500 "as if they would not be appreciated unless they demanded high salaries and lived in the old Civil Service style and dressed up as such." That was not the way to serve India. They should not forget, he warned, that a man's value did not depend upon the amount of money that he earned. The process of self-purification, which they all must share, demanded right thought and action.[3]

Like the prophets of old, he reminded them that no nation was immune from the operation of the moral law. A correspondent had written to him that if his death had occurred as a result of his fast, it would have plunged the whole country into the flames of a civil war. Gandhiji said, he had rehearsed to himself that terrible possibility also. The Yadavas destroyed one another before Lord Krishna's death. "If the people had become indolent and vicious like the Yadavas and God saw that there was no way out but extermination, He might make even an ordinary person like me the instrument of such catastrophe." But what he had seen during the fast had, he added,

nerved him to hope that there was no such self-destruction in store for India.

Referring to their democracy's growing pains, in another utterance of his he observed that the question of the redistribution of the Provinces on linguistic lines was on the anvil. Cultural autonomy had been the watchword of the Congress. But there was a danger that it might be exploited by local political bosses to secure the plums of power for themselves. The charter of India's independence as conceived by the Congress was based on village autonomy. But the villages were to "derive vitality from the Centre, as the latter in its turn derived all power and authority from the village." It would be fatal if the principle of linguistic distribution of the Provinces was used to foster narrow provincialism. "Redistribution was intended for cultural development. It should not be mobilised against the organic unity of India. Autonomy did not and should not mean disruption . . . or India's independence would lose its meaning." He was deeply pained to find, he remarked after a visit by a veteran Congress leader who had filled an important office in the Congress organisation for a long time, that even he was not free from that parochialism which puts regional loyalty above patriotism.

The 26th January, 1948—the first Independence Day celebration after independence (see pages 649–50) served only to make him ask once more whether this was the independence that he and the Congress had dreamed of. "This observance was quite appropriate," he observed, "when we were fighting for independence we had not seen or handled. Now that we have handled it and seen it, we seem to be disillusioned. At least I am, even if you are not."

In the morning on the 27th, he set out to attend the annual Urs at Mehrauli. Set in the midst of idyllic surroundings seven miles to the south of Delhi is Mehrauli, famed in history as the ancient capital of Prithviraj. It is the seat of the Dargah Sharif of Khwaja Syed Qutubuddin Bakhtiar—a shrine ranking in holiness and sanctity second only to the world famous *dargah* of Khwaja Mohayuddin Chishti at Ajmer. During the disturbances, it had witnessed some ghastly deeds. A great religious fair was held there every year, attended not only by Muslims from all over India but even by Hindus—such is the catholicity and tradition of religious toleration for which Sufism stands. Owing to disturbed conditions, it was feared that the fair might not be held that year. But Gandhiji had made the holding of the fair as one of the conditions for breaking his fast and all parties had pledged themselves to its fulfilment. The Delhi Administration had got the precincts of the shrine and its environments cleaned up and the damage, which the shrine had suffered during the disturbances, repaired as far as possible. A special bus service had been arranged to carry the prospective visitors to the shrine and

back. Sanatani Hindus and militant Sikhs vied with each other in fraternising with the Muslims. They welcomed them with flowers and opened for them free tea-stalls. It was a sight to see Hindu and Sikh volunteers stand shoulder to shoulder with Muslim volunteers to render social service. No-one could have imagined a few days ago that such a vast fraternal crowd of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Delhi could assemble there like that to celebrate a Muslim festival. Most agreeably surprising was the presence of hundreds of Hindu and Sikh women in the crowd. The atmosphere was redolent of the palmiest days of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Accompanying Gandhiji to the fair were three women members of his party. Women as a rule are not allowed to go into the shrine beyond a certain point as it is against the Islamic tradition to admit women in the *sanctum sanctorum* of Muslim shrines. Gandhiji told the custodians of the *dargah* that the women members of his party would stop wherever the Islamic practice required. He would leave them under the protection of anyone whom they might depute. But personally he would love it if they chose a Muslim. The Muslim friends who had taken him there, however, said that there was no need to leave them behind. They looked upon them "not as women but as Mahatmaji's daughters". The whole party was accordingly taken inside the shrine. A salver heaped with benedictory sweets was presented to Gandhiji. These he distributed to the crowd around him. One of the Muslims requested that the women members of Gandhiji's party should sing the verses from the Muslim prayer, Fateha, just as they did daily at his evening prayer meeting. This they did with pleasure.

"I am afraid Hindu and Sikh shrines in Pakistan must have suffered similar damage," Gandhiji remarked with a deep sigh as he saw the marks of vandalism on the lovely marble screen in the *dargah*. News had appeared in the Press that, according to a statement issued by the Pakistan Government, 130 innocent Hindus and Sikhs had been killed in Parachinar refugee camp at Peshawar by raiders from across the tribal territory. The actual casualties, it was feared, were many more. And yet, the news had not provoked any outbreak of violence in the capital. "I must say," remarked Gandhiji as he came out of the shrine, "the response of the Sikhs to my call to non-violent courage has exceeded my expectations."

Referring to the Parachinar incident in the course of his address at the shrine Gandhiji said: "I want you to take a vow that you will never again listen to the voice of Satan and abandon the way of brotherliness and peace." The news had shocked him but they must not allow, he went on to observe, even such incidents to rekindle in their hearts the sentiment of retaliation or revenge. They must regard it as a test of their faith. They should tell themselves and all concerned that they were out not to demand blood for blood but

to meet with love even the murderer. If the people of Delhi thoroughly purified and kept pure their hearts, Delhi could solve the problem of India. If, on the other hand, they did things which they did not mean only to prolong the life of an old man like him, they would really be encompassing his death while they deluded themselves into the belief that they were saving his life.

He felt very disappointed with the way in which the Security Council of the United Nations Organisation was dealing with the Kashmir question. Instead of considering India's complaint and getting the aggression vacated, the stage was being set to ask India to withdraw her troops from Kashmir as preliminary to the holding of a plebiscite which would decide the future of Kashmir. It seemed to have become a packed body, where falsehood and prevarication enjoyed a high premium. "Today they are preparing to put Pandit Nehru's Government in the dock," he remarked during his journey back from *dargah*. "Unless we are extremely wary, we shall come out with our name tarnished."

In view of the assurances about the improvement in the communal situation in Delhi that were pouring in, Gandhiji had suggested in one of his prayer meetings that as a further step each Hindu and Sikh who came at his meeting should bring with him at least one Muslim. He was disappointed when in reply to his inquiry at the prayer meeting in the evening as to how many Muslims were there in the gathering, only one hand went up.

Vincent Sheean, the American author, was waiting for his first interview with Gandhiji when he returned from the prayer. The interview was continued on the next day. They discussed the philosophy of ends and means and of the renunciation of the fruits of action propounded in the Gita. Gandhiji maintained that though the whole argument of the Gita was cast in the form of a vindication of righteous war, the logic of that argument when applied to the mundane plane led not to a justification of physical warfare but a *reductio-ad-absurdum* of the same. His objection to the use of force was not that force could as well be used to support unrighteous wars; it was fundamental. "I do not know what is intrinsically good. Hence I do not go by results. It is enough if I take care of the means." For instance, as a nature-curist, he did not believe in the use of sulpha drugs. Suppose he got typhoid. Should he abandon his belief and try to get cured by taking sulpha drugs? "I do not know whether it is good for me or humanity to be cured by the use of sulpha drugs; so I refuse to use sulpha drugs. . . . If evil do seem sometimes to result from good, the inference would be that the means employed were probably wrong." Means and ends in his philosophy of action were convertible terms. "Good action to produce good results must be supported by means that are pure."

Since those who govern were more concerned with the "fruits

of action" than with the "truth of action", Gandhiji's interviewer next asked, how was society under his philosophy to be well-governed at all if those who believed in non-violence and the philosophy of the right means kept away from the Government. In reply Gandhiji expounded to him his theory of representative democracy backed by a non-violent sanction (see pages 663-64). Asked further whether this did not call for a very prolonged and high degree of discipline which it would be too much to expect of common people, he answered, "No." It was their inertia that made people think so. "Too much is being made of the study of things that are in my view really of not much consequence to humanity to the neglect of things eternal. Take for instance, the exact distance of the sun from the earth or whether the earth is round. The discipline that is necessary to discover the laws that govern life is no less important and yet we say that it is so laborious that only a numbered few can attain it. For instance, we steal in so many ways—not to steal in any shape or form needs some mental poise, contemplation. I have given my time not to abstract studies but to the practice of things that matter." The moral was that the realisation of a non-violent social order would not be found to be so difficult if people developed the right outlook and the right sense of values.

To Sheean's question whether misuse of atomic energy might not endanger our planet itself since the phenomenal universe is perishable, Gandhiji answered that everything was possible "including the dissolution of appearances . . . and the survivors, if any, will then say, 'What a wonderous spectacle!' " He very much doubted that the advent of the atomic era would basically affect human problems. "They claim that one atom bomb changed the entire course of the war and brought the end of war so much the nearer. And yet it is so far. Has it conquered the Japanese spirit? It has not and it cannot. Has it crushed Germany as a nation? It has not and it cannot. To do that would require resorting to Hitler's method, and to what purpose? In the end it will be Hitlerism that will have triumphed."

They then talked about the last war. The whole of the Gita was an argument in defence of a righteous war, Gandhiji's visitor argued. The last war was a "war in a righteous cause". Yet violence was more rampant as a result than it was ever before. Gandhiji agreed so far as the result of the last war was concerned. Even in India they had not been able to escape from its back-wash. "See what India is doing. See what is happening in Kashmir. I cannot deny that it is with my tacit consent. They would not lend ear to my counsel. Yet, if they were sick of it, I could today point them a way. Again, see the exhibition that the United Nations Organisation is making. Yet I have faith. If I live long enough . . . they will see the futility of it all and come round to my way."

But he did not agree that the Gita was either in intention or in

the sum total an argument in defence of a righteous war. Though the argument of Gita was presented in a setting of physical warfare, the "righteous war" referred to in it was the eternal duel between right and wrong that is going on within us. There was at least one authority that supported his interpretation. The thesis of the Gita was neither violence nor non-violence but the gospel of selfless action—the duty of performing right action by right means only, in a spirit of detachment, leaving the fruits of action to the care of God.

* * *

Some refugees from Bannu, survivors of the massacre on the train at Gujarat railway station on the eve of Gandhiji's fast, came to Birla House in the afternoon of the 29th January for an audience with him. One of them said to him: "Why do you not now take rest? You have done enough harm. You have ruined us utterly. You ought now leave us alone to retire to the Himalayas."

Gandhiji: "I cannot retire at anybody's bidding. I have put myself under God's sole command."

The man persisted: "It is God who is speaking to you through us. We are beside ourselves with grief."

Gandhiji: "My grief is not less than yours."

Narrating the incident at the prayer meeting in the evening, Gandhiji remarked that he could not run away from them to enjoy the peace of the mountains. But if they all went to the Himalayas, he might follow them as their servant.

The whole day on the 29th January was crammed with engagements. At the end of it he felt utterly exhausted. "My head is reeling. And yet I must finish this," he remarked to Abha, pointing to the draft of the Congress constitution, which he had undertaken to prepare for the Congress Working Committee, and then added: "I am afraid I shall have today to keep late hours."

At 9.15 he rose to go to bed. After getting into the bed, he used generally to allow his attendants to massage his tired limbs—more for their sake than his own. It provided, too, an opportunity for a light care-dispelling chat after the day's heavy routine. Sometimes he would crack jokes. They were never empty. "I allow the girls to become my 'walking sticks'," he remarked, referring to his practice of resting his hands on their shoulders while walking, "but really I have accustomed myself to not depending on anybody for any thing. Girls come to me as to their father. I like it but personally it means nothing to me."

He reprimanded for her indifferent health a woman inmate of the Sevagram Ashram who had come to see him. It showed that Ramanama had not fully entered her heart. "But that needs faith," he added, and once again the longing came over him to demonstrate by one perfect act the faith that filled him and which he had struggled

through his life to express. To another Ashram inmate he remarked: "I have to find peace in the midst of turmoil, light in the midst of darkness, hope in despair."

Surveying the political scene, he mused why Congressmen, who had toiled and sacrificed for freedom's sake and on whom now rested the burden of independence, were succumbing to the lure of office and power? "Where will this take us? How long will this last? Shall we be able at this rate to maintain our prestige in the world? Where do I stand? What must I do to realise unruffled calm and serenity in the midst of this disquiet?" And then in a tone of infinite sadness he repeated the well-known verse of Nazir, the celebrated Urdu poet of Allahabad:

> "Short-lived is the splendour of Spring
> in the garden of the world,
> Watch the brave show while it lasts."

Presently he had a severe fit of coughing. Being asked to suck penicillin lozenges to allay it, he reiterated for the last time his resolve to be cured by the power of Ramanama alone. To one of his attendants who was massaging his head, he said: "If I die of a lingering illness, nay even by as much as a boil or a pimple, it will be your duty to proclaim to the world, even at the risk of making people angry with you, that I was not the man of God that I claimed to be. If you do that it will give my spirit peace. Note down this also that if someone were to end my life by putting a bullet through me—as someone tried to do with a bomb the other day and I met his bullet without a groan, and breathed my last taking God's name, then alone would I have made good my claim."

3

On the fateful Friday, the 30th January, 1948, Gandhiji woke up as usual at 3.30 a.m. One of his party had not got up for prayer. He felt unhappy over it. He ascribed the trivial lapse on the part of his co-worker to some shortcoming in himself. After the morning prayer he sat down on his pallet to complete the draft of his note on the reorganisation of the Congress which he had been unable to finish on the previous night.

He was still feeling weak after his fast. At quarter to five, he had his usual drink of hot water, honey and lemon juice, followed an hour later by 16 ounces of orange juice. He then laid himself down for a nap. After a while he woke up and asked for his file of correspondence to be brought to him. He then searched for a Gujarati letter which he had written on the previous day to Kishorlal Mashruwala. It had somehow got mislaid in his file and so had remained unposted. After some search he found it and gave it for despatch.

29th January, 1948

My dear Kishorlal,

I am utilising the time after the morning prayer to write this. You did well to give me the news about the death of Shankaranji's daughter. I have written to him. The plan about my going to Sevagram is still indefinite. If I could be said to have "done" in Delhi, it might not be necessary for me to be here to keep my pledge (of "do or die"). But that is for the people here to judge. The question will perhaps be decided tomorrow. . . .

Yours
Bapu

The following was the note of condolence to the co-worker: "Kishorlal gave me news of the death of your daughter Sulochana. . . . What can I write to you? What comfort can I give you? Death is a true friend. It is only our ignorance that makes us to grieve. Sulochana's spirit was yesterday, is today and shall continue tomorrow. The body, of course, must die. Sulochana has gone taking with her her failings but the good in her she has left behind. Let the memory of it make you ever more vigilant in the discharge of your duty."

He did not feel well enough to go out for his morning walk. So he paced up and down for a while inside his room. He used to take palm-jaggery lozenges with powdered cloves to allay his cough. The clove powder had run out. Manu, therefore, instead of joining him in his constitutional sat down to prepare some. "I shall join you presently," she said to him, "otherwise there will be nothing at hand at night when it is needed." Gandhiji did not like anyone missing his duty in the immediate present to anticipate and provide for the uncertain future. "Who knows, what is going to happen before nightfall or even whether I shall be alive?" he said to Manu and then added: "If at night I am still alive you can easily prepare some then."

Passing through my room in the guest house for his massage at the usual time, he handed me the draft of the new constitution for the Congress—his Last Will and Testament to the nation—and asked me to go through it carefully. "Fill any gaps that you may find in my thinking. I prepared it under heavy strain."

After the massage, he inquired if I had finished the revision, and asked me to prepare a note in the light of my experiences and experiments in Noakhali on how to meet the threatened food crisis in Madras. "The Food Ministry are feeling nervous," he remarked, "but I maintain that a Province like Madras, that is blessed by nature with coconut and palm, groundnut and banana in such abundance, not to mention roots and tubers of so many kinds, need not go about with the beggar's bowl, if the people have learnt to husband their resources well."[4]

He then had his bath. Coming out after his bath, he looked much refreshed. The strain of the previous night had disappeared and he was full of his usual sunlit humour. He twitted the Ashram girls for having weak physiques. When someone told him that a woman member of the Sevagram Ashram, who was to have left that day, had missed the train as there was no conveyance, he remarked: "Why did she not walk to the station?" It was no idle remark either. He expected everybody in a soldierly way to be ready to cope with every emergency with whatever resources were at hand. "Therein fail not" was the unvarying directive with which every assignment of his was accompanied. Lack of facilities or the difficulty of execution was never accepted as an excuse. A couple of years before the historic Salt March to Dandi, during one of his tours in South India, when the transports ran out of petrol, he had once got ready precisely at the scheduled time to set out on foot with the necessary files and his travel kit for the nearest railway station 13 miles away.

His weight being then taken, the scale registered 109 lbs. After doing his daily exercise in Bengali writing he had at 9.30 his morning meal consisting of cooked vegetables, 12 ounces of goat's milk, four ripe tomatoes, four oranges, the juice of raw carrots and a decoction of ginger, sour limes and *ghrita kumari* (aloes). While at it he went through the additions and alterations that I had made in the draft of the Congress constitution point by point and removed an error of calculation in the original draft as to the number of Panchayat leaders.

On the previous day he had sent me to Dr. Rajendra Prasad to inquire about his health, and with a message to Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, who was at that time a Minister of the Central Cabinet, to bring to his attention the activities of a Hindu Mahasabha worker who had been delivering highly inflammatory speeches containing incitement to assassination of some Congress leaders. Could not Dr. Mookerjee, as the Hindu Mahasabha leader, use his authority to put a curb on such wild utterances? Dr. Mookerjee's reply was halting and unsatisfactory. It seems he had under-estimated the seriousness of the danger represented by such irresponsible utterances and activities and the heavy toll they would exact before long. Gandhiji's brow darkened as I repeated to him Dr. Mookerjee's reply.

I then gave him the latest news from Noakhali that I had from Dr. Mookerjee. This led to a discussion on Noakhali. On the previous day I had asked Gandhiji, what in the event of a possible war between the two Dominions over the Kashmir issue, he would expect us in Noakhali to do. The Hindu inhabitants of Noakhali would have long ago come away to India but for the trust they put in our word and the confidence which our presence in their midst had inspired. Suppose we were all made prisoners of war and put in concentration camps, what would be the plight of those who had put faith in us? Should the women be left to run the risk of being

dishonoured? Was it not better in the circumstances to work for their planned evacuation, while there was yet time, especially as Pakistan was now foreign territory? In reply he had scribbled: "If what I have said appeals to your head and heart, you will continue to teach the people to protect themselves while you are at large. If death comes in the course of your mission of non-violence you will embrace it. If they throw you into prison you will fast unto death. Those who have this capacity may continue to remain in Noakhali and face death undeterred by what may befall women. There must be no cowardly retreat."

I again put to him my difficulty: "We shall be safe inside the concentration camp. How can we leave the women to their fate?" His reply was emphatic. Casualties could not be avoided. Just as the workers had to be prepared to "do or die", even so they had to prepare the people, including the women, to "do or die". There could be no running away from danger for either. "Are not whole battalions sometimes wiped out in armed warfare? Besides, those inside the camps will not remain helpless witnesses of what happens outside if they have the strength to fast unto death. Even by remaining outside they could do no more. Maybe in this way very few workers will be left in the end. But there is no other way of making the weak strong."

Referring to some of the experiments in constructive non-violence that I had been conducting in Noakhali, and some of which at his bidding I had recorded in *Harijan*, he proceeded: "How I have longed to do all these things myself! What we need is to shed the fear of death and steal into the hearts and affections of those we serve. This you have done. To love you have joined knowledge and diligence. Forget others. If even one person—you alone for instance—did your part fully and well, it would cover all. I have told you, I need you with me here. By being away from me you have missed and I have missed a lot. There is much I would have liked to share with the world but I could not because I had left you behind in Noakhali. And yet I feel that in the balance the gain has outweighed the loss What you are doing in Noakhali is in my eyes more precious."

I asked him what we should do if the Noakhali authorities took no action against local bad characters and notorious ringleaders. He said the way was for us to meet the ringleaders with courage and in faith, but without a trace of bitterness or anger, and bring home to them their misdeeds. "There must be no weakness or beating about the bush in talking to them. A mealy-mouthed approach won't do. If there is nothing but love in the heart, your words will go home. That is what I did in the case of A. He is today a changed man. There must be a frank admission of their guilt by the guilty ones before there can be genuine friendship." He then outlined to me the plan of his proposed visit to Pakistan and said: "You can go to Noakhali, disengage yourself and return in time to accompany me to Pakistan." I told him that in

that case I ought to be leaving for Noakhali that very day. He said, "No, you can leave only after I start for Wardha. This means you can perhaps leave on the 2nd February." Again it struck me as a bit unusual. It was never his habit to ask anyone to delay his return to his post of duty.

At half-past ten he laid himself down on his cot for rest, doing his daily Bengali reading before he dozed off. When he woke up he saw Sudhir Ghosh, who had recently returned from Hyderabad. Sudhir, among other things, read out to Gandhiji a cutting from the London *Times* and extracts from a letter from an English friend showing how a persistent campaign was being carried on by some people to play up the differences between Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel—running down the latter as a communalist, while pretending to praise the former. Gandhiji remarked that he was well aware of it. He had already dealt with it in one of his post-prayer speeches. He was thinking what more to do.

I was about to leave for the city in the afternoon to attend to some important business when the Delhi Maulanas turned up. Discussing with them his contemplated visit to Sevagram and Pakistan, Gandhiji told them that if he did not leave for Sevagram on the proposed date, all his plans would be upset. The Maulanas said, they had no wish to detain him on their account. For they knew that he would be working for them wherever he was. The interval would enable them to assess and report to him how the implementation of the pledges given as a result of his fast was progressing. They hoped he would be able to return to Delhi by the 14th February. "I do expect to be back here by the 14th," Gandhiji replied. "But if Providence has decreed otherwise, that is a different matter. I am not, however, sure whether I shall be able to leave here even on the day after tomorrow. It is all in God's hands."

On being asked if a wire should be sent to Sevagram intimating the date of his arrival there, he said: "Why waste money on a wire? I shall announce the date in the course of my prayer address. They will see it in the papers at Sevagram even before the telegram reaches them."

At 1.30 in the afternoon he had his abdominal mud pack. The sun was warm. So he slipped on his Noakhali peasant's bamboo hat to shade his face. A journalist asked him if it was true that he would be leaving for Sevagram on the 1st February. "Who says so?" Gandhiji asked. "The papers have it," replied the journalist. "Yes," remarked Gandhiji, "the papers have announced that Gandhi would be going on the 1st. But who that Gandhi is, I do not know."

Mud-pack over, the interviews recommenced. Among those who came to see him were Dr. De Silva from Ceylon and his daughter. The latter got him to give her an autograph—perhaps the last autograph given by him in his life. A French photographer came next and presented

to him an album of photographs. Other interviews followed. Margaret Bourke-White of *Life* magazine was having her interview with him when I left for the city.

At 4 p.m. the interviews came to an end. He then repaired with Sardar Patel, who had come with his daughter, to his room and had a talk with him for over one hour, while spinning. Although he had previously expressed his view, he told the Sardar, that one of the two—either the Sardar or Pandit Nehru—should withdraw from the Cabinet, he had since come to the firm conclusion that the presence there of both of them was indispensable. Any breach in their ranks at that stage would be disastrous. He further said, he would make that the topic of his post-prayer speech in the evening. Pandit Nehru would be seeing him after the prayer; he would discuss the question with him, too. If necessary, he would postpone his going to Sevagram and not leave Delhi till he had finally laid the spectre of disunity between the two.

This became to the Sardar Gandhiji's final injunction. The difference in outlook with Pandit Nehru remained even after that but the bond of loyalty uniting them became indissoluble. After Gandhiji's death, I had once occasion to go to the Sardar to obtain redress in some cases of wrong done to Muslims that Gandhiji had entrusted to me. The Sardar gave his unstinted support and redress was secured in the case of some. In some other cases, he referred me to Pandit Nehru. I wrote a rather impassioned note to Pandit Nehru and showed the draft to the Sardar. He said, "all right, send it." Hardly had I left the Sardar's room when Pandit Nehru went in—looking pale, care-worn, and tense with the mark of many a sleepless night on his face. I could not bear the thought of adding to the strain through which he was passing and instinctively cancelled the draft I had prepared. As soon as Pandit Nehru had left, the Sardar walked into the room where I was. "Have you sent that note to Jawaharlal?" he asked. "No," I replied. "Well then, don't. Did you notice his face as he came in? He is so burdened with care. . . ." I showed him the draft with the word "cancelled" written across it in red pencil, and he went back relieved.

The ideological tussle between the Sardar and Pandit Nehru continued even after Gandhiji's death but the sobering effect of realities and the utterly selfless devotion to the country's good, to which both were pledged, in practice reduced their line of action more or less to a common denominator. To the best of my knowledge, there never was swerving even by a hair's breadth on the Sardar's part with regard to the basic loyalty towards his colleague. And with the mellowing effect of time, as the cares and burdens of administration weighed more and more heavily upon Pandit Nehru, his appreciation, too, of the Sardar's incomparable qualities grew. Two and a half years later and only three months before he himself was

gathered unto his master, in a memorable speech on Gandhiji's birthday celebration at Indore, on the 2nd October, 1950, Sardar Patel said: "Our leader is Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Bapu appointed him as his successor in his lifetime and proclaimed him as such. It is the duty of all Bapu's soldiers to carry out Bapu's behest. Whoever does not accept it from his heart in that spirit will be a sinner before God. I am not a disloyal soldier. I do not have any thought of the place I am occupying. I only know this much: I am still where Bapu put me."

* * *

And so the talk with the Sardar continued. At 4-30 p.m. Abha brought Gandhiji his evening meal. It was practically the same as that served in the morning.

It was getting near prayer time. But the Sardar had still not finished. Poor Abha felt fidgety, knowing the great importance that Gandhiji attached to punctuality, particularly in regard to prayer time. But she dared not interrupt. At last becoming desperate, she picked up his watch and held it before him to draw attention. But it was no good. Noting her predicament, the Sardar's daughter tactfully intervened. "I must now tear myself away," Gandhiji said to the Sardar as he rose to get ready to go to the prayer-ground. On the way, one of the attendants told him that two workers from Kathiawad had asked for an appointment. "Tell them to come after prayer," Gandhiji replied. "I shall then see them—if I am alive."

He then walked to the prayer ground, his hands resting on the shoulders of Abha and Manu as he laughed and exchanged jokes with them. Referring to the raw carrot menu which Abha had served him in the afternoon, he twitted her: "So you are serving me cattle fare!"

"Ba (Kasturba Gandhi) used to call it horse fare!" Abha replied.

"Is not it grand of me," he rejoined, "to relish what no-one else would care for?"

"Bapu, your watch must have felt neglected," Abha joked. "You would not look at it."

"Why should I since you are my time-keepers?" he retorted.

"But you would not look at the time-keepers either?" Abha rejoined, and Gandhiji laughed.

As he cleared the footsteps leading to the terrace where the prayer was held, he remarked: "I am late by ten minutes. I hate being late. I like to be at the prayer punctually at the stroke of five."

Here the conversation abruptly ended, there being a tacit compact between Gandhiji and his "sticks" that as soon as they entered the prayer ground, all jokes and conversation should cease—nothing but thoughts of prayer must fill the mind.

The crowd parted, making a lane for Gandhiji to pass through

and reach the dais. As Gandhiji took his hands off the shoulders of the two girls to answer the greetings of the crowd, someone roughly elbowed his way through the crowd from the right. Manu tried to stop him by catching hold of his hand but he violently jerked her off and, bending before Gandhiji with his palms folded as if in the act of making an obeisance, fired point-blank three shots in quick succession from his seven-chambered automatic pistol at so close a range indeed that one of the ejected shells was afterwards found caught in the folds of Gandhiji's clothes. The first shot entered the abdomen on the right side two and a half inches above the navel and three and a half inches to the right of the mid-line. The second penetrated the seventh intercostal space one inch to the right of the mid-line, and the third on the right side of the chest one inch above the nipple and four inches from the mid-line. The first and the second shots passed right through and came out at the back. The third remained embedded in the lung. At the first shot the foot, that was in motion when Gandhiji was hit, came down. He was still on his legs when the second and third shots rang out. Then he collapsed. The last words he uttered were "Rama! Rama!"[5]

The face turned ashen grey. A spreading crimson spot appeared on the white clothes. The hands that had been raised in *namaskar* to the gathering came slowly down, one arm falling in its natural place on Abha's shoulder. The limp body sank softly down. Then only did the dazed girls realise what had happened.

Returning from the city I had, on my way, picked up from our residence my brother's five year old child, who was one of Gandhiji's favourite mascots, and had insisted on accompanying me to Birla House that evening. When we reached Birla House, someone was asking for Sardar Patel's car to be brought up. This meant that Gandhiji must have got up from his seat to go to the prayer meeting and we must hurry up. I asked the child by my side to pull off her shoes and follow me while I went straight to the prayer ground. I had hardly reached the colonnade of stones that leads to the prayer ground when B.P.Chandwani, one of Gandhiji's aids, came running down from the opposite direction. "Telephone for a doctor at once," he shouted. "Bapu has been shot dead!"

I stood petrified as in a nightmare. What was there to telephone for if Bapu was "shot dead?" Mechanically I asked someone to ring for a doctor.

Everybody felt staggered. A woman medical graduate of Lady Hardinge Medical college, a friend of my sister's, who came behind Gandhiji, placed his head gently on her lap as the quivering body lay prone before her—eyes half shut. The assassin, Nathuram Godse, was grappled by the Birla House gardener, Raghu Mali, and was with the help of others overpowered after a short scuffle.

The still, limp body was carried inside by friends. Gently they laid him on the mattress where he used to sit and work. But before anything could be done, the clock had ceased to tick. A teaspoonful of honey and hot water that was administered after he was brought in remained unswallowed. Death must have been almost instantaneous. Post-mortem report the next day declared: "Death. . .caused by shock and internal haemorrhage due to . . . injuries inflicted . . . by bullets fired from a pistol."

My sister, Sushila, had not yet returned from Bahawalpur. Dr. B.P. Bhargava arrived soon after Gandhiji's body was brought in and began frantically to rummage Sushila's emergency medicine chest for adrenalin. I asked him to spare himself the trouble. Gandhiji had charged us not to allow any prohibited drugs to be administered to him even to save his life. As years rolled by, he had tended more and more to rely on Ramanama alone as the cure-all for himself and for others. Only the other day, during his fast, he had clinched an argument about the limitations of science by saying, "What else is the meaning of एकांशेन स्थितो जगत्—*ekanshena sthito jagat*—the one sustaining principle on which the whole creation rests, of which the Gita speaks?" To G. D. Birla, his host, he had remarked with a sigh, speaking of his faith in Ramanama: "If I cannot make it good in my life, it will go down with my death." As it turned out, there was no adrenalin in the emergency chest. In Noakhali Sushila had specially sent for a phial of synthetic adrenalin for Gandhiji. But it seems he had not taken it along with him when from there he went to Bihar. So little did he care for it.

First to arrive at Birla House from among Gandhiji's colleagues was Sardar Patel. He sat down by his side, felt the pulse and fancied it was still beating feebly. Dr. Bhargava examined the pulse and the eye reflexes a little later and slowly muttered, "Dead for ten minutes." Dr. Jivraj Mehta standing opposite with his gaze rivetted on Dr. Bhargava's face, ruefully shook his head. Abha and Manu burst into sobbing. But presently they collected themselves and began to chant Ramanama. By the side of the Mahatma's lifeless body sat the Sardar with his wan, haggard face set like granite. Next came Pandit Nehru and burying his face in Gandhiji's clothes sobbed like a child. Sardar Patel consoled him, affectionately patting him on the back. Devadas, the Mahatma's youngest son, followed and tenderly taking his father's hand into his, burst into tears. Then came others: Maulana Azad, Jairamdas Daulatram, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Acharya Kripalani and K. M. Munshi. Lord Mountbatten had returned from Madras by air that very day, leaving behind Lady Mountbatten to complete her engagements in the city. When he arrived at Birla House, the crush outside had become so great that he could get in only with difficulty.

A crowd gathered round him as soon as he entered the gate. A

hot-headed youth said aloud: "It was a Muslim who murdered him."

"You fool," cut short Mountbatten with his characteristic presence of mind, "everyone knows it was a Hindu."

This had a calming effect on the crowd that was becoming excited. A member of Mountbatten's staff, who was with him, remarked to him: "How do you know it was a Hindu?" "It must be a Hindu," replied Mountbatten. For if it is a Muslim, we are lost."

Everybody was dazed. Sardar Patel felt crushed. "Others can weep and find relief from their grief in tears," he remarked to me afterwards. "I cannot do that. But it reduces my brain to pulp."

In an adjoining low-lit room sat Pandit Nehru in a chair deeply exercised over arrangements to be made for the funeral procession and the cremation ceremony on the next day. He narrated afterwards: "Suddenly I said to myself, let me go and consult Bapu. Then I realised.... So accustomed has the mind become to taking all our difficulties to him."

Without losing a moment, Mountbatten, the seasoned soldier, took upon himself, like an elder member of the family, the burden of the entire situation. Going straight from his friend's dead body to Pandit Nehru, he beckoned Sardar Patel to join him and said: "Gandhiji's last request to me was to do everything in my power to bring you two together and keep you friends." Under the shadow of their common grief they needed no prompting. They nodded their heads and embraced each other in silence. Again at night they both broadcast from the All-India Radio at his request.

A suggestion was made for embalming Gandhiji's body and keeping it in state at least for a period. Knowing how uncompromising Gandhiji's opposition was to a fetish being made of the physical body after death, I felt it to be my sacred duty to intervene. "But that would be contrary to Bapu's wishes," I whispered into Dr. Jivraj Mehta's ear. "Then you must tell them," Dr. Mehta said to me and pushed me forward. "Your Excellency," I said addressing Lord Mountbatten, "it is my duty to tell you that Gandhiji very strongly disapproved of the practice of embalming and he gave me specific standing instructions that his body should be cremated wherever his death occurred." Dr. Jivraj Mehta and Jairamdas Daulatram supported me.

"If he had died in the normal course, full of years and honours," Mountbatten said, "that would have been all right. But considering the special circumstances, don't you think . . . ?" He paused, making a gesture of interrogation with his outstretched hand.

I answered: "Gandhiji told me, even in my death I shall chide you if you fail in your duty in this respect."

"His wishes shall be respected," said Mountbatten. And so the idea of embalming was given up.

For the rest of the night the sweet chanting of the Gita by members of Gandhiji's party and of Sukhmani Saheb (the Sikh scripture) by some Sikh friends, who were present, filled the stillness of the room, while outside the surging crowd continued to press in for *darshan*. All the doors and windows of the room where the dead body lay were lined with glistening, mournful eyes and blanched sorrow-stricken faces flattened against the glass. Some banged the glass pans with their fists. Their sobs mingling with the shuffling of their feet, as the seething mass heaved to and fro outside, rose and fell in a mournful symphony like the distant moaning of the sea in a storm. Sometimes the pressure against the doors became so great that it was feared that the glass might fly into splinters or the doors give way and the whole crowd come pouring in. After some anxious consultation the body was taken upstairs and placed on a balcony for general view, the light from a flourescent lantern bathing the still face in its mild radiance.

In the midst of it all, I suddenly found my mother standing before me. She had gone out into the shopping area in New Delhi after I had come away from her with my little niece. Someone gave her the news. A car from Devadas Gandhi's residence brought her to Birla House. "Where is the child?" she asked. I could not tell her. Under the staggering blow, I had completely forgotten about her. She had been left outside. I tried to push my way through the grief-maddened crowd to look for her several times. But to no purpose. After a little while a servant of Birla House brought her in. He had found her crying in the midst of the seething mass and recognised her. But for his timely assistance, she might have got crushed in the crowd.

My mother was ill. I felt, I could not allow her at her age—she was seventy, with incipient cataracts in her eyes—to expose herself to the strain of the mournful vigil at Birla House, and of the weary trudge to the cremation ground the next day. I would not be able to give her the attention she needed and everybody else would be equally preoccupied. I sent her back with the child to their residence. It wrung my heart when afterwards she narrated to me with tears how she had ventured out next day all by herself in that vast crowd to have a last *darshan* of the dead body as the cortege passed along but could not see it, owing to her failing eye-sight. Gandhiji had showered on her his regard and affection as he alone knew how to, since she had given the two of us to him when she needed us both to look after her in her widowhood. Her devotion to Gandhiji had grown with years. "This is the cruelest injustice you have done me," she later complained. She, who had forgiven all the heart-breaks that I had caused her since I had left her and home to join Gandhiji, never forgave me this. Nor did I.

At night Pandit Nehru's voice was heard on the All-India Radio: "Friends. . . . The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere and I do not quite know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we called him, the Father of the Nation, is no more. . . . We will not see him again as we have seen him for these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him. The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will illumine this country for many more years and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented the living truth, and the eternal man was with us with his eternal truth reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom."

In the small hours of the night, the body was bathed and anointed with sandalwood paste and then laid down in the middle of the room covered with flowers. The members of the Diplomatic Corps came in the morning and paid silent homage to the departed one, laying their wreaths at his feet.

As I gazed at the still sad face, infinite peace, forgiveness, and compassion writ large on it, the entire vista of twenty-eight long years of close, unbroken association from the time when, fresh from the college, I had come to him, full of dazzling dreams and undimmed hopes, and sat at his feet, flashed across the mind's eye. And what crowded years at that!

I pondered over the meaning of what had happened. I felt dazed. And then slowly the enigma began to resolve itself. The other day when he had spoken to me about even one man doing his part fully and well, what did he precisely mean—I had wondered. His death provided the answer. Previously when he fasted, he used to ask us to watch and pray. "Children must romp while the father is in their midst," he used to say. "They will also do the things that I am now doing when I am gone." His death had pointed the way which many of us had to tread if the flames that threatened to envelope the country were to be put out, and the independence which he had won for it was to be enjoyed by those for whom it was meant.

Once more the dead body was taken upstairs and placed upon the balcony to enable the milling crowd below to have a final *darshan*. At 11.30 a.m. the bier was taken out of Birla House and placed on a weapon-carrier hung with flags and festooned with flowers. The funeral procession was about to start when suddenly there was a stir near the gate. At the same time the crowd parted and made way. Sushila had just arrived from Lahore disconsolate at the thought of not having been by Gandhiji's side in his last hour but thankful that Providence

had brought her back not too late for the last *darshan.* Sardar Patel helped her climb up the weapon-carrier.

She was at Multan (West Punjab) on the 30th January on her way back to Delhi from her mission to Bahawalpur. "When is Gandhiji coming to us," asked the wife of the Deputy Commissioner, who had invited her for a cup of tea. Minutes later, another woman dashed into the room in great agitation, exclaiming, "What is the world coming to? They say Gandhiji is shot!"

Narrated Sushila afterwards: "I turned pale and began to shiver, saying to myself, 'No, no, it must only be a rumour.'"

"We shall ring up Delhi and find out," said the Deputy Commissioner. But Sushila did not want to find out. She wanted to cling to the last thread of hope. The wound might not be serious after all. "Please don't," she answered. "Let me proceed to Lahore immediately. I want to reach Delhi as soon as possible."

The Deputy Commissioner lent his car to take her to Lahore. Those were dangerous days. The Deputy Commissioner insisted on sending her with an armed escort. A bayonet stuck out of each window. Several times the car was stopped on the way. But the governmental authority cleared the way. It was a moonlit night. She prayed hard that the Mahatma's wound would not prove fatal.

After an all-night drive, the car reached Lahore at 6 a.m. A friend came to sympathise. Her manner frightened Sushila. A little later Pandit Nehru's familiar voice was heard on the radio. His broadcast address of last evening was being relayed. It left no room for hoping against hope. She felt stunned. It seemed an endless wait before the plane took off.

On board the plane with her was Mian Iftekharuddin, a Muslim leader of West Punjab. He had rushed impulsively to Delhi to have Gandhiji's last *darshan.* As they alighted from the plane Mian Saheb said to her in a choked voice: "My dear sister, the man who pulled the trigger is not Bapu's murderer. All of us who at any time doubted his word and entertained a feeling of violence and communalism in our hearts are responsible for his murder."

"Why this punishment," Sushila exclaimed in anguish that evening, still disconsolate at not having been able to be by Gandhiji at the last moment. Devadas consoled her: "It was no punishment; it was your proud privilege to be executing Bapu's last order. You are luckier by far than any of us."

The Defence Ministry had taken over charge of the arrangements for the funeral. The undertaking was so colossal that it was deemed to be altogether beyond the capacity of any voluntary organisation to tackle it. With the whole city in a state of turmoil, the possibility of a commotion being touched off which might envelope the whole country

in a chain reaction of violence, was frightening. The army had overnight converted the chassis of a weapon-carrier to serve as a bier. On a raised platform in the middle of it rested the dead body, covered with a white, green and saffron national flag and half buried under the mass of wreaths, garlands and flowers. On the right side of the bier sat Ramdas, Gandhiji's third son, on the left Sardar Patel and Devadas Gandhi in front. Other members of Gandhiji's "family" and leaders took their turns on the vehicle by the side of the bier or walked behind the cortege chanting Ramadhun.

A party of two hundred men from the army, the navy and the air force drew the carriage by four stout ropes. The engine was kept shut throughout. Four thousand soldiers, a thousand airmen, a thousand policemen and a hundred sailors walked in front and behind the bier. Lancers on horseback flying white pennants—the Governor-General's bodyguard—led the way. All through the journey soldiers, policemen and armoured cars helped in controlling the crowd.

The cortege moved extremely slowly inch by inch in mournful silence broken only by an occasional muffled roar of *Mahatma Gandhiji-ki Jai*. After an hour the War Memorial arch was reached. People had got on to the base of King George Fifth's statue by wading through the surrounding pool. They hung on to the pillars supporting the stone canopy, were seen perched on the top of the 150-feet high War Memorial, on the lamp and telephone posts, and among the branches of the trees on both sides of the route, to have a better view of the cortege as it passed below. The entire Central Vista was a vast, ant-heap of humanity, looking from a distance almost motionless. Three planes of the air force swooped repeatedly down showering flowers as the procession moved down the Hardinge Avenue and approached Delhi Gate.

At 4.20 p.m. the procession reached the Rajghat cremation ground by the side of the Jumna. The people had been gathering there since the morning. The whole area around the cremation ground, as far as the eye could reach, was a sea of grief-stricken faces. Again and again the milling crowd pressed forward. They broke through the cordon that had been formed round the funeral pyre, while the troops struggled to keep them back. It was with great difficulty that the mounted lancers managed to prevent them from making a rush at the pyre. Several children fainted. Sardar Patel, Pandit Nehru, and Lady Mountbatten were seen carrying some of the children to safety.

At last the bier was taken down from the weapon carrier and laid on a raised platform that had been built near the funeral pyre for the performance of the final rites before the cremation. At 4.30 the body was placed on the funeral pyre. Fifteen maunds of sandalwood, four maunds of ghee, two maunds of incense, one maund of coconuts and fifteen seers of camphor had been collected for the cremation. Flower-

garlands and wreaths were placed at the feet of the dead body, the Chinese Ambassador, doyen of the Diplomatic Corps in the capital leading. The Indian national flag that covered the bier was then removed. Devadas Gandhi piled logs of sandalwood on the body of his father which was sprinkled with the holy Ganges water. The funeral pyre was lit by his elder brother Ramdas Gandhi to the chanting of Vedic hymns.

Lord and Lady Mountbatten with their two daughters sat with the rest on the ground while the cremation rites were being performed. Many of the "Old Guard" were seen sobbing. Sardar Patel sat like a statue, his hand resting on the head of a sobbing girl.

It was now 4.45 p.m. As tongues of fire began slowly to crawl up among the logs, the mass round the pyre rose to pay a last homage to the Father of the Nation by observing one minute's silence. Higher and higher the red flames leapt against the setting sun. A thunderous shout went up from the vast gathering, "*Mahatma Gandhi amar ho gaye* —Mahatma Gandhi has become immortal." In that final rite, as the flames consumed the earthly remains of the Mahatma, was symbolised the fulfilment of the Vedic prayer

> "Lead me from the Unreal to the Real
> From Darkness to Light
> From Death to Immortality."

The sweet fragrance of the incense filled the whole atmosphere. Soon the blaze became too fierce for those seated in the front rows to remain there. By 6 p.m. the Mahatma's remains were completely reduced to ashes.

As the sun went down, the crowd began to melt. Birla House was plunged in darkness when we returned. In the sepulchral silence of Gandhiji's unlit room, which till quite the other day his presence had converted into the hub of the world, the question again returned to my mind. He had always said Ahimsa is the activest force in the world which conquers all obstacles and before which all hatred must dissolve. Why should then he, who was Ahimsa personified, have fallen to the assassin's bullets? The mystery baffled me. And then as the inner turmoil subsided the answer came straight and clear.

If he had died just after his phenomenal successes, it would still have left unanswered the question: Are right and might identical and interchangeable terms? If Satyagraha be an all-conquering force—as it undoubtedly is—what is there to prevent one from regarding whatever bears the mark of success as right? And might it not lead one unconsciously to assume that might is right and make of successful might his God—a dangerous doctrine, since on viewing events and processes of history not in their fullness but in a restricted segment of time and space, as we generally do, might is very often seen to win in the world and right and justice to go under?

Gandhiji removed that question mark for us by his end. "Our acts are ours, their ends none of our own." Man cannot control the course of events always and things may go awry some time in spite of all human effort, owing to the operation of what has been called the "fifth determining factor, or the Unseen Power". *Daivam chaivatra panchmam*—दैवम् चैवात्र पंचमम्—"Providence is the fifth and decisive element in the fruition of an action." But a Satyagrahi can always take the evil out of it and turn the poison into nectar by reacting to it correctly in terms of truth and Ahimsa and thus baulk life's accidents of their sting and the grave of its victory.

By meeting the assassin's bullets at the height of his career and as a reward, as it were, for a lifetime of service, without a trace of ill-will or anger in his heart and with God's name and prayer for the assailant on his lips till the last conscious moment, Gandhiji converted a tragedy into a triumph and a fulfilment, thereby dramatising the central truth of Satyagraha, as nothing else could have done, that it converts reverse into a stepping stone to success, conquers through surrender, and wins in spite of and some time even through defeat; it never fails. The establishment of communal harmony for which he had toiled and laboured all his life, had baffled him while he lived, so much so that a growing section had begun even to question its very basis. His death at one stroke put the issue beyond the pale of controversy once and for all.

This also provides the answer to the question, "Did he attain the secret of the power that is Ahimsa about which he had said that it can envelop the whole world?" A single silent thought can envelop the whole world, he had declared, but he also had said that no man in the flesh had ever succeeded in expressing it fully in word or in action. "The very attempt to clothe thought in word or in action limits it."[6] He had, therefore, of late begun to say that he would feel perfectly satisfied that he had done his part if he could leave behind one perfect example of non-violence. By embodying in its completeness that One Perfect Act of his aspiration in the manner of his going hence, he showed how the full potential of the power that is Ahimsa can be released and what it can achieve when it is released.

Such a one never dies. "He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he."

Unto each man his handiwork, unto each his crown,
The just Fate gives.
Whoso takes the World's life on him and his own lays down,
He, dying so, lives.
Whoso bears the whole heaviness of the wrong'd world's weight,
And puts it by,

It is well with him suffering, though he face man's fate;
How should he die?
Seeing death has no part in him any more, no power
Upon his head;
He has bought his eternity with a little hour,
And is not dead.
For an hour if ye look for him, he is no more found,
For one hour's space;
Then ye lift up your eyes to him and behold him crown'd,
A deathless face.
On the mountains of memory, by the world's well-springs,
In all men's eyes,
Where the light of the life of him is on all past things,
Death only dies.

4

After the pyre had burnt for fourteen hours and been left for another twenty-seven hours for the ashes to become cold, the remains consisting of ashes and half calcined pieces of bones known as "phool" i.e. flowers, were collected from the burnt-out pyre and transferred to an urn to the performance of the usual rites. The copper vessel containing the ashes was hung with wreaths and garlands of flowers and taken to Birla House to be kept there till the immersion day. In the evening, prayers were offered at Rajghat. Among those who participated in them was Gandhiji's dear friend Khwaja Abdul Majid, the staunch nationalist Muslim leader from Aligarh (see page 100). He read the following verses from the Koran:

> O ye who believe, seek help from God through patience and forbearance. And do not regard those who are killed in the service of God as dead. They are alive though ye cannot understand. . . . It is not possible for anyone to die except by God's leave at the preordained time.

The ten-day interval between the collection of the ashes and their immersion was a period of prayerful heart-searching for all. "After I am gone, no single person will be able completely to represent me," Gandhiji used to say to us. "But a little bit of me will live in many of you. If each puts the cause first and himself last, the vacuum will to a large extent be filled."

It would almost seem that for some time past he had instinctively been preparing those around him for this. Some time before the end, the son of a very close associate had written to him to ask whether it

was necessary to stick to Khadi even after independence. The letter being read to him by one of his aids for his instructions, he said: "Write to him, if he needs to ask this question even at this late hour, he should give up Khadi altogether. What is the use of hanging on to it if inner conviction is lacking? Everybody must live his *dharma*—the truth of his being—and be guided by his own inner prompting, not go by what another says. There is however an exception. The *guru*'s word is law to one who has accepted him as his *guru*."

"But, Bapu, are you not in the place of *guru* to us all?" his aid asked.

He replied: "In that case reasoning should be unnecessary. My word should go straight home without the aid of ratiocination."

He then laid himself down for rest. But what he had been saying kept running in his mind. After a little while, he opened his eyes and said in a low voice, in continuation of his remarks: "Do you remember the story of Ekalavya?"

Ekalavya, a poor low caste youth, according to a legend in the Mahabharat, was turned away owing to his low extraction by Dronacharya, the famed instructor of the Kaurava and the Pandava princes in military science, when he went to him to be instructed in the art of archery. Undaunted he returned to the forest and set about practising the art before a clay model of the great Drona, whom he adopted as his *guru*. Some time later, when a tournament in arms was held, he entered into it incognito and surpassed all the royal pupils of Dronacharya, including his favourite Arjuna, in feats of archery! The moral of the story is that the inspiration provided by the faith in the *guru* is a more valuable part of one's training than any verbal instruction that the *guru* may give.

In those difficult days, when the ship of India's independence was labouring over the harbour bar in the rough seas around, one often heard the exclamation: "What would we not give to have him back with us for even one short hour to guide and advise us?" This was but natural. But sometimes one wondered.

> Do we indeed desire the dead
> Should still be near us at our side?
> Is there no baseness we would hide?
> No inner vileness that we dread?
>
> How pure at heart and sound in head,
> With what divine affections bold,
> Should be the man whose thought would hold
> An hour's communion with the dead.

He would not be in our midst in the flesh for ever, Gandhiji used to impress upon each and all. But he would be there always by the side

of anybody who had that faith and longing in his heart. The inspiration would be according to the faith and striving of each.

Many friends would have liked a part of the *asthis* to be preserved and kept in a public place after the manner of the Buddha's sacred relics. Some of his closest associates asked to be permitted personally to retain a part of the remains as a token. In view of Gandhiji's repeated injunction in the matter, however, it was decided not to allow any departure from what was known to be his specific wish. He had long ceased to belong to his family. No individual by virtue of blood or any other personal tie had a special claim upon him. Home he had none, or rather the whole world was his home, and mankind his family. What could not be shared with the least, he held to be of little account and not worth having. He summed up the whole philosophy of his life in one sentence : "I recognise no God except that God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions. . . . And I worship the God that is Truth . . . through the service of these millions."[7] And again : "I believe in the absolute oneness of God and, therefore, of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source. I cannot, therefore, detach myself from the wickedest soul nor may I be denied identity with the most virtuous."[8]

With that philosophy of his life before us, we felt that he would not like his ashes to rest under a costly mausoleum. He belonged to the whole world and aspired to identify himself with the entire creation. The only fit custodian of his physical remains could therefore be the elements. And what place could serve better as his final resting place than the bosom of India's lakes and mighty rivers? So sacred Triveni, where rested Kasturba's ashes also, was chosen for the main ceremony of immersion. In its immemorial flow had mingled the ashes of the nameless millions of India, whose joys and sorrows he had made his own and in whose collective life it was his ambition to merge himself like a drop in the ocean.

For the last time the railway authorities ran a special train for the Mahatma—this time for his ashes. In the middle of a coach on a raised platform stood the urn containing the ashes, laden with flowers. Friends and followers chanted hymns and prayers by turns. There were dense, seething crowds at all railway stations, big and small, throughout the journey. Some had walked on foot long distances just to catch a glimpse of the fateful train. Silent and sad, they stood, tears trickling down their eyes. Some of them had waited there like that for more than twenty-four hours. Now and then someone would break out into an anguished cry, calling the departed one by name, and bang his or her head against the compartment.

As the day advanced, the crowds were seen lining up on both

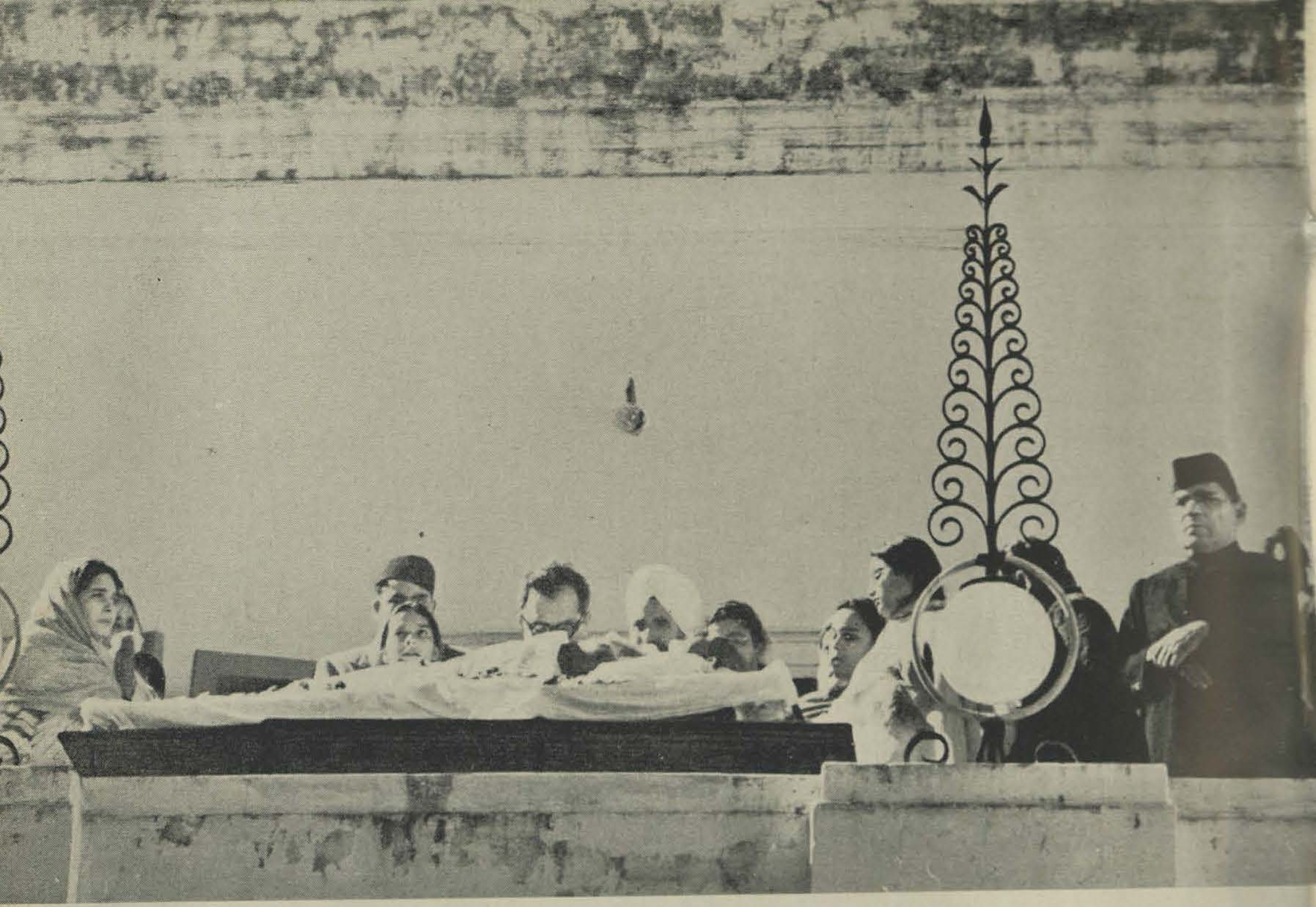


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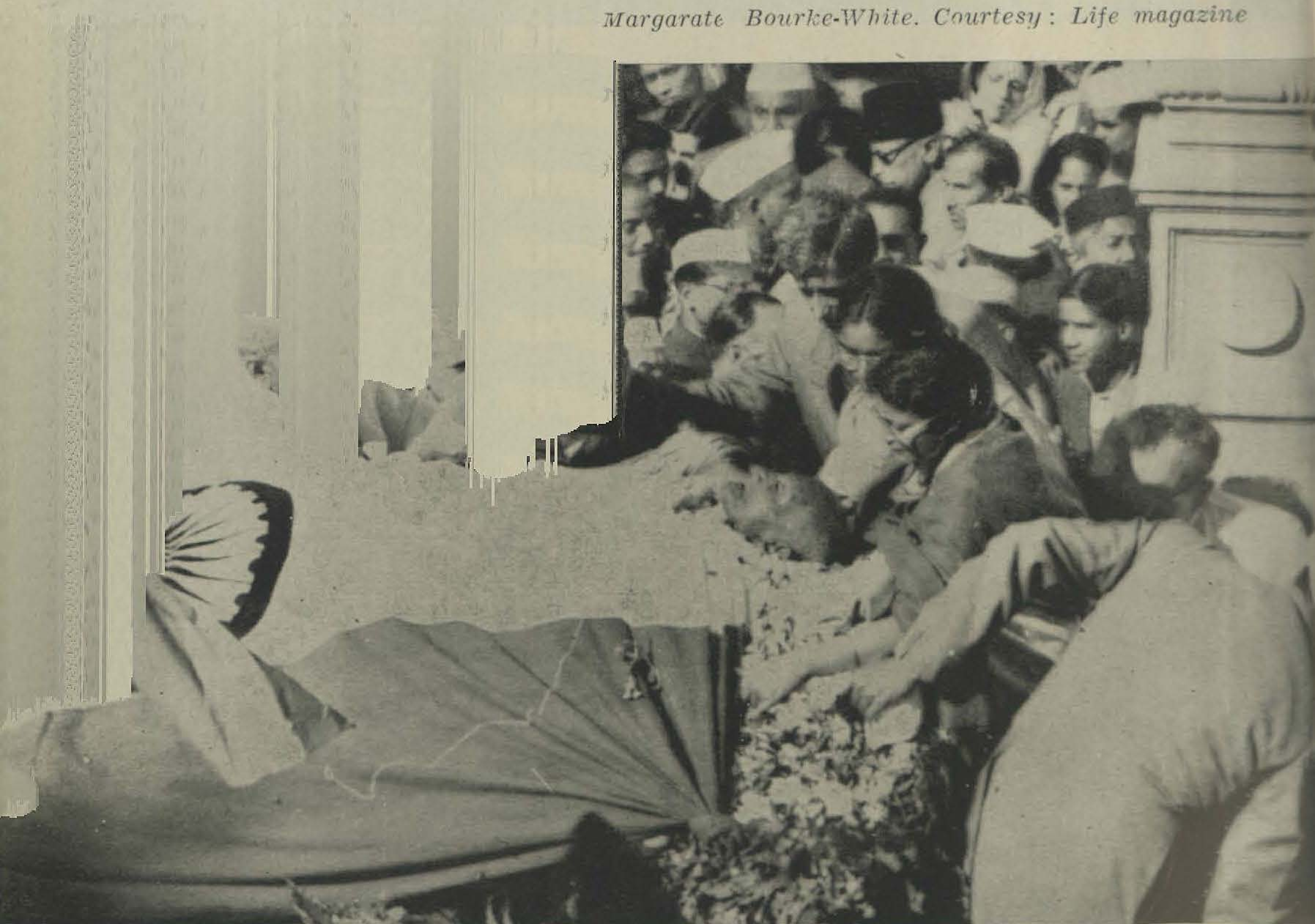
(Above) In eternal sleep. "Still sad face...infinite peace, forgiveness and compassion." (page 777). (Below) "Sweet chanting of the Gita... filled the stillness of the night." (page 776)

[ONE





Margarate Bourke-White. Courtesy: Life magazine



(Above) "The...body was...placed upon the balcony for final *darshan*." (page 777). (Below) "A stir near the gate....Sushila...arrived from Lahore disconsolate. (page 777)



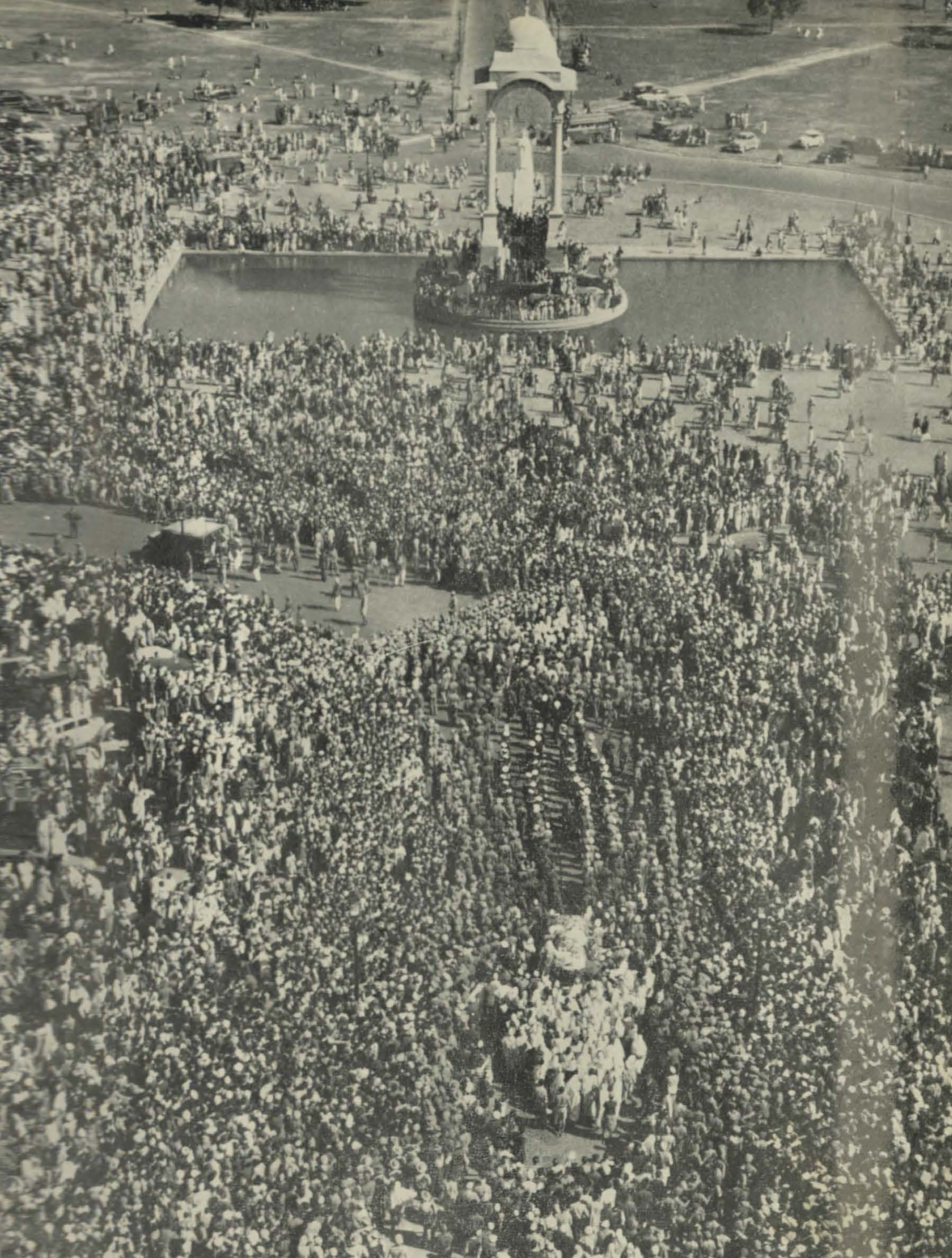
Margarate Bourke-White. Courtesy: Life magazine

"The bier was...placed on a weapon-carrier hung with flags and festooned with flowers." (page 777)




Publication Division, Govt. of India

FOUR] "Central Vista was a vast ant-heap of humanity." (page 779)



Publication Division, Govt. of India

"Two hundred men from the army, the navy and the air force drew the carriage." (page 779)



Bourke-White. Courtesy: Life magazine

"People ...were seen perched on the top of the 150 feet high War Memorial and on the lamp and telephone posts on both sides of the route." (page 779)

(Right) Members of Gandhiji's "family" offering last prayer before cremation. (Below) "Lord and Lady Mountbatten...sat with the rest on the ground while the cremation rites were...performed." (page 780)

[SEVEN



Hindustan Times

Henri Cartier-Bresson





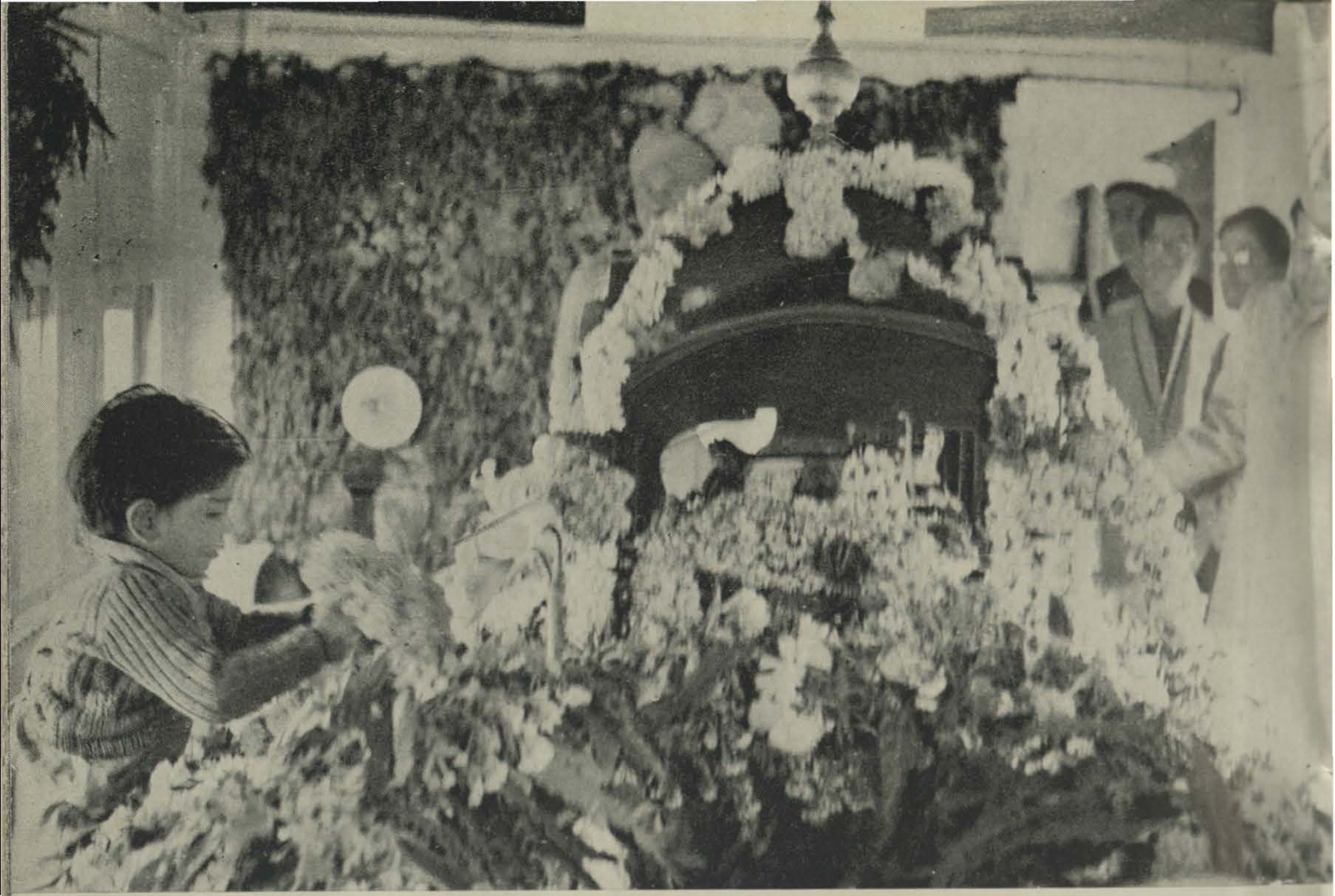
" Higher and higher the red flames leapt against the setting sun. A thunderou

EIGHT]



Press Information Bureau, Govt. of India

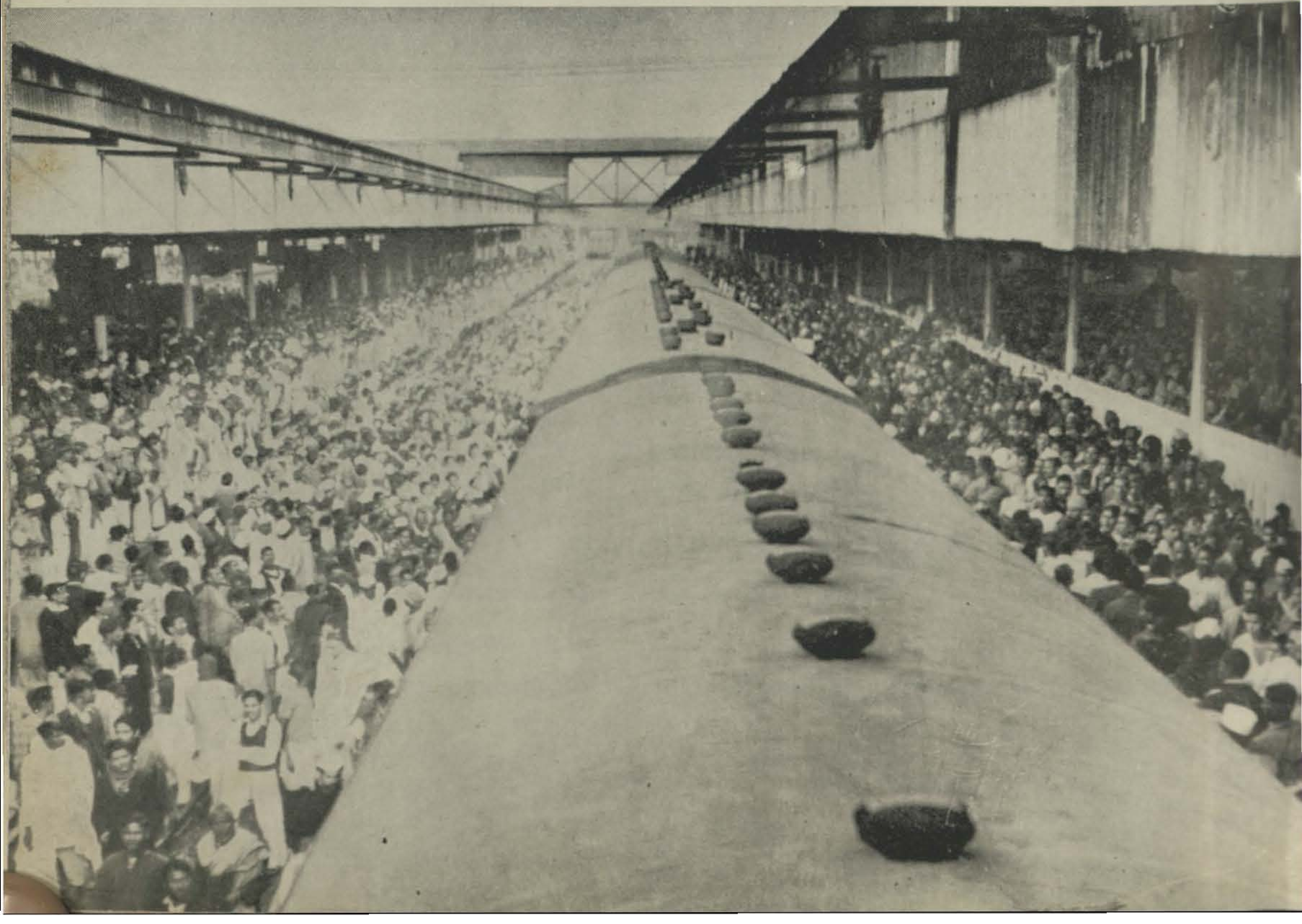
out went up from the vast gathering: 'Mahatma Gandhi has become immortal.' (page 780)

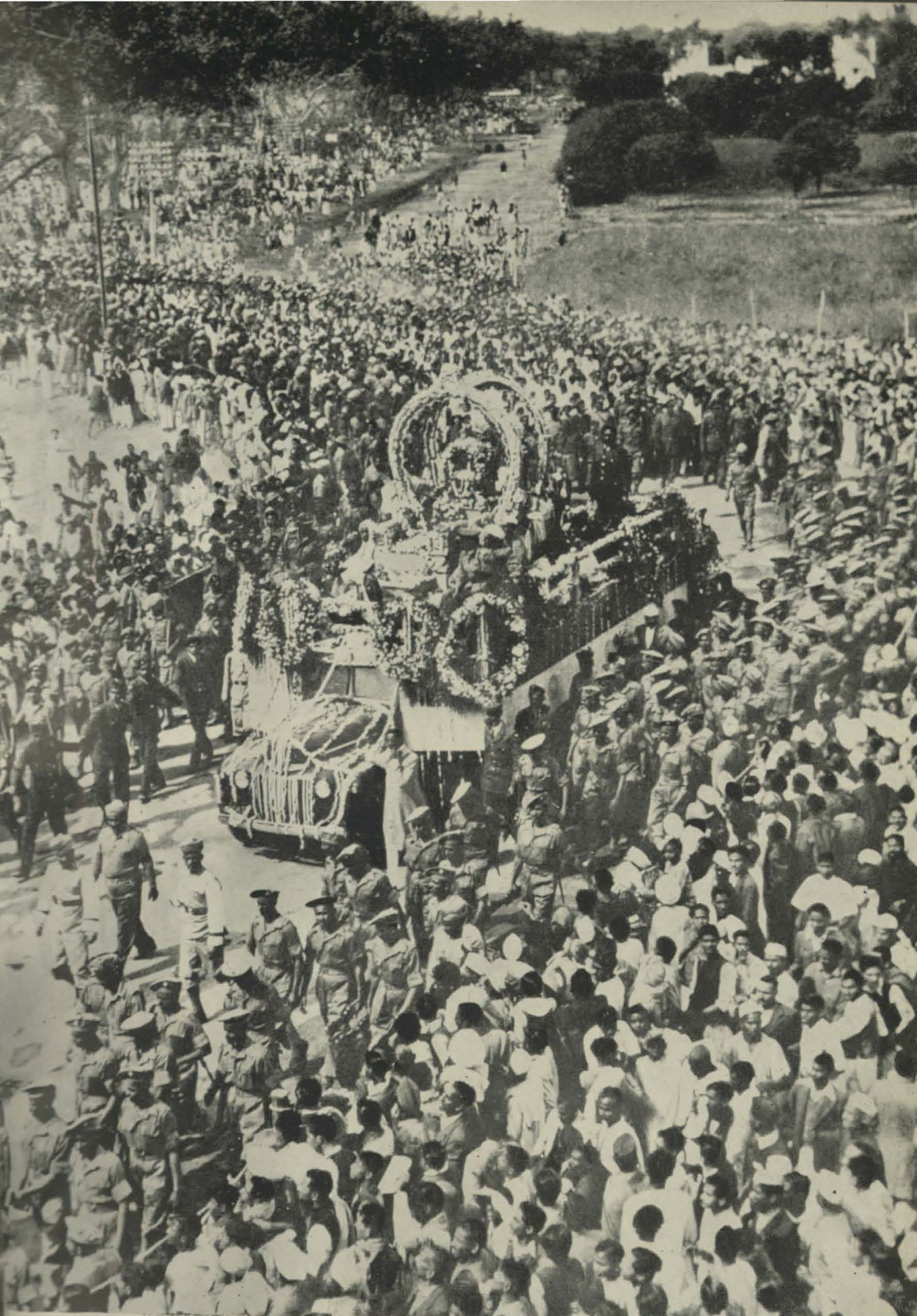


Hindustan Times

(Above) Grandson and playmate Gopu takes final leave of his grandfather's ashes. (Below) The " lonesome train " at a wayside station.

Hindustan Times





Hindustan Times

On way to Triveni — the equaliser. " A mammoth crowd followed the ashes to the riverside." (page 785)

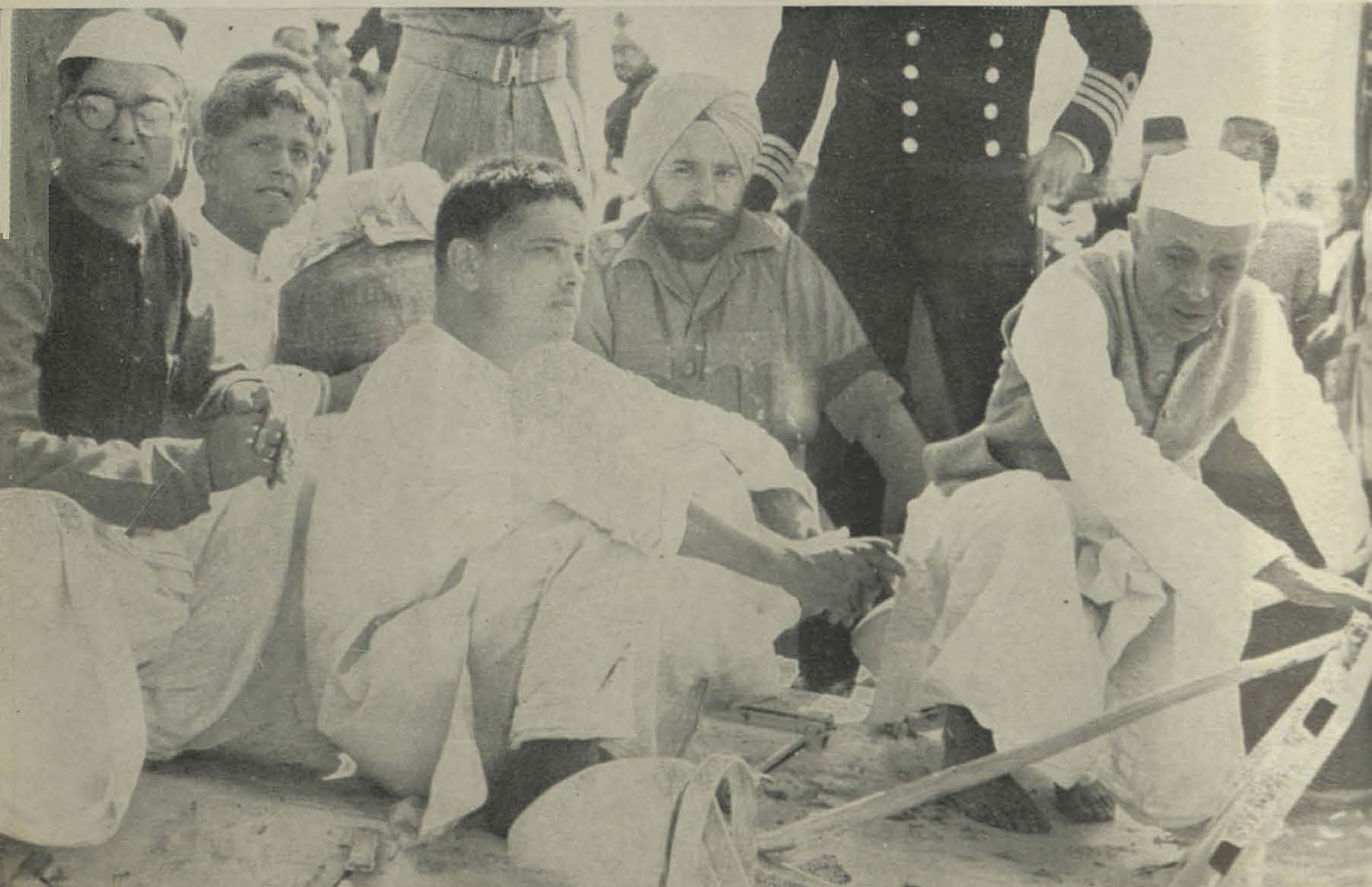


Publication Division, Govt. of India

TWELVE]

(Above) A part of the vast crowd at the river side. "Nearly three million people witnessed the immersion ceremony." (page 785) (Below) The "duck" bearing the urn at Sangam.

Hindustan Times



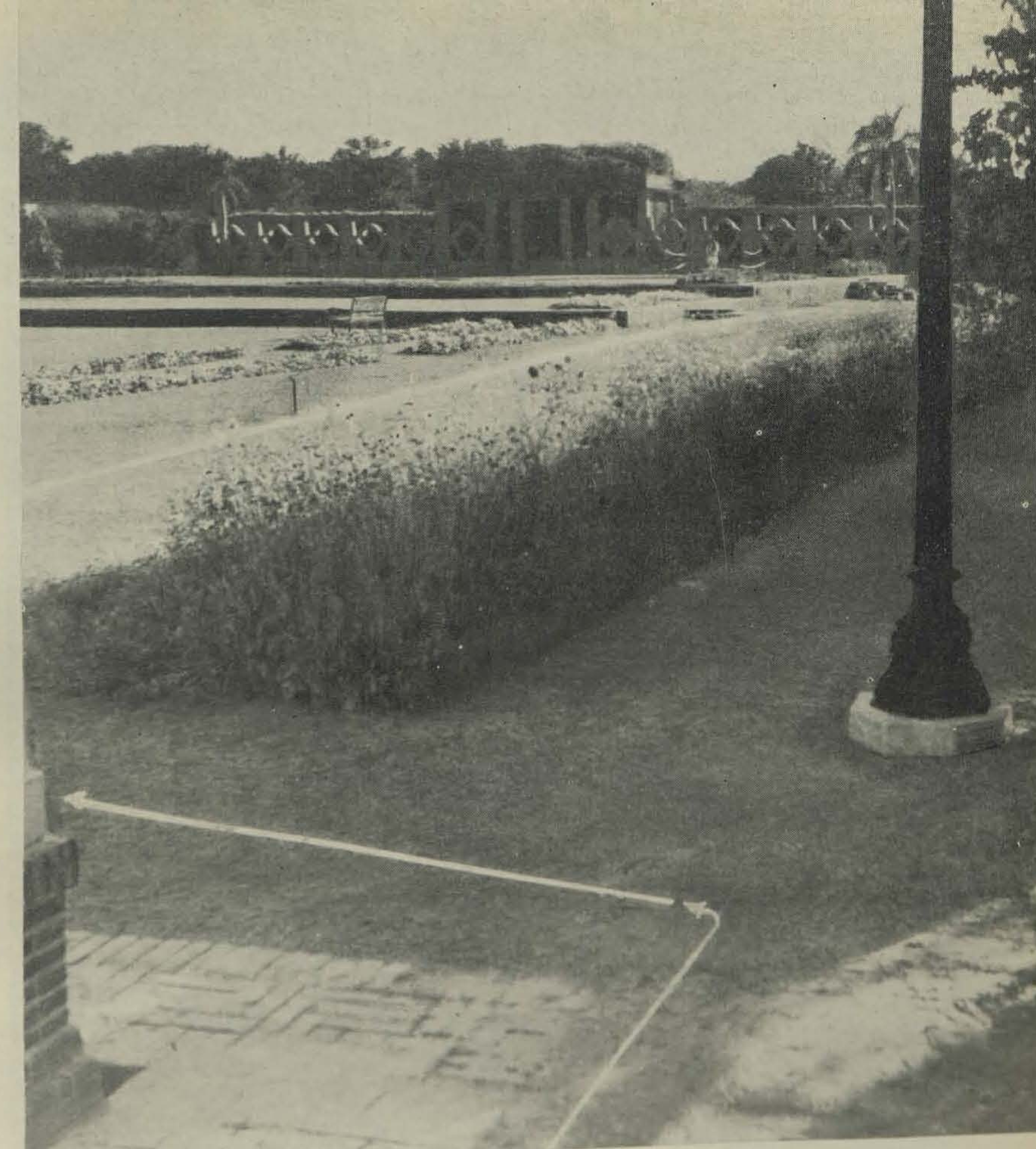


Hindustan Times

Pandit Nehru laying a wreath at the Samadhi at Rajghat. "The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere...(but) for many more years and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts." (page 777)

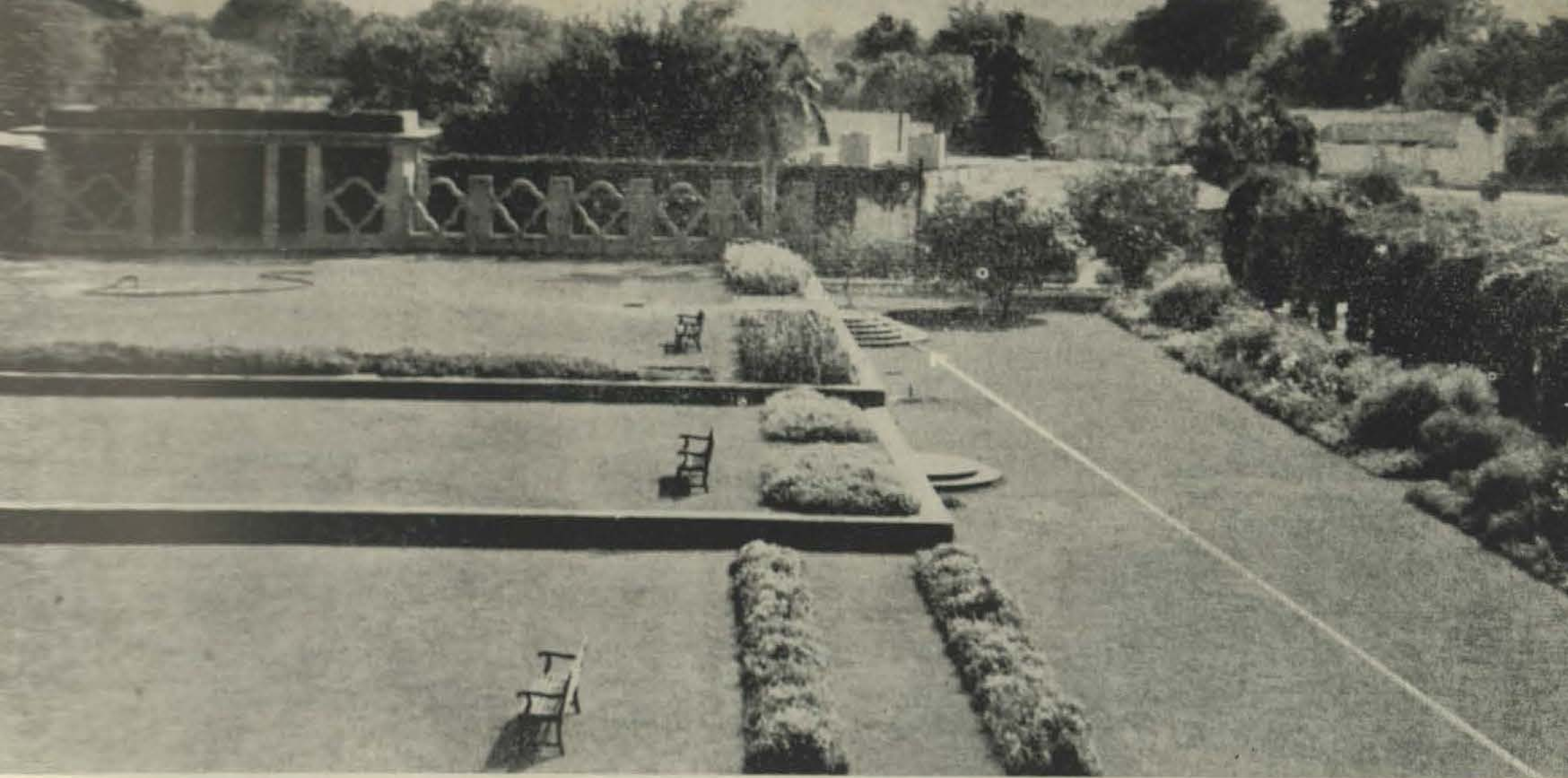


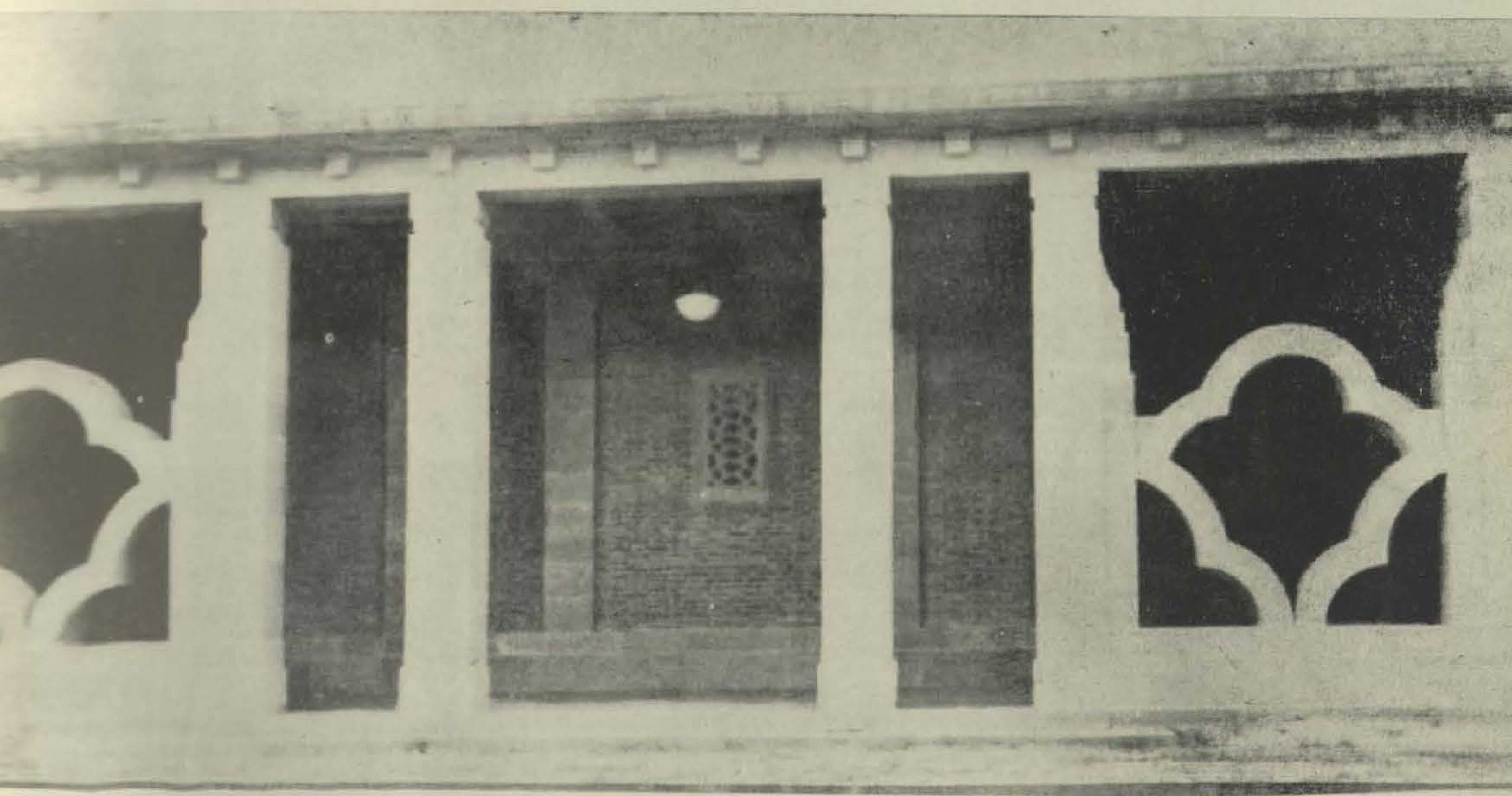
Hindustan Times



Hindustan Times

The Birla House at Delhi. Arrow marks indicate the path by which Gandhiji went out from his room to the prayer ground.





Hindustan Times

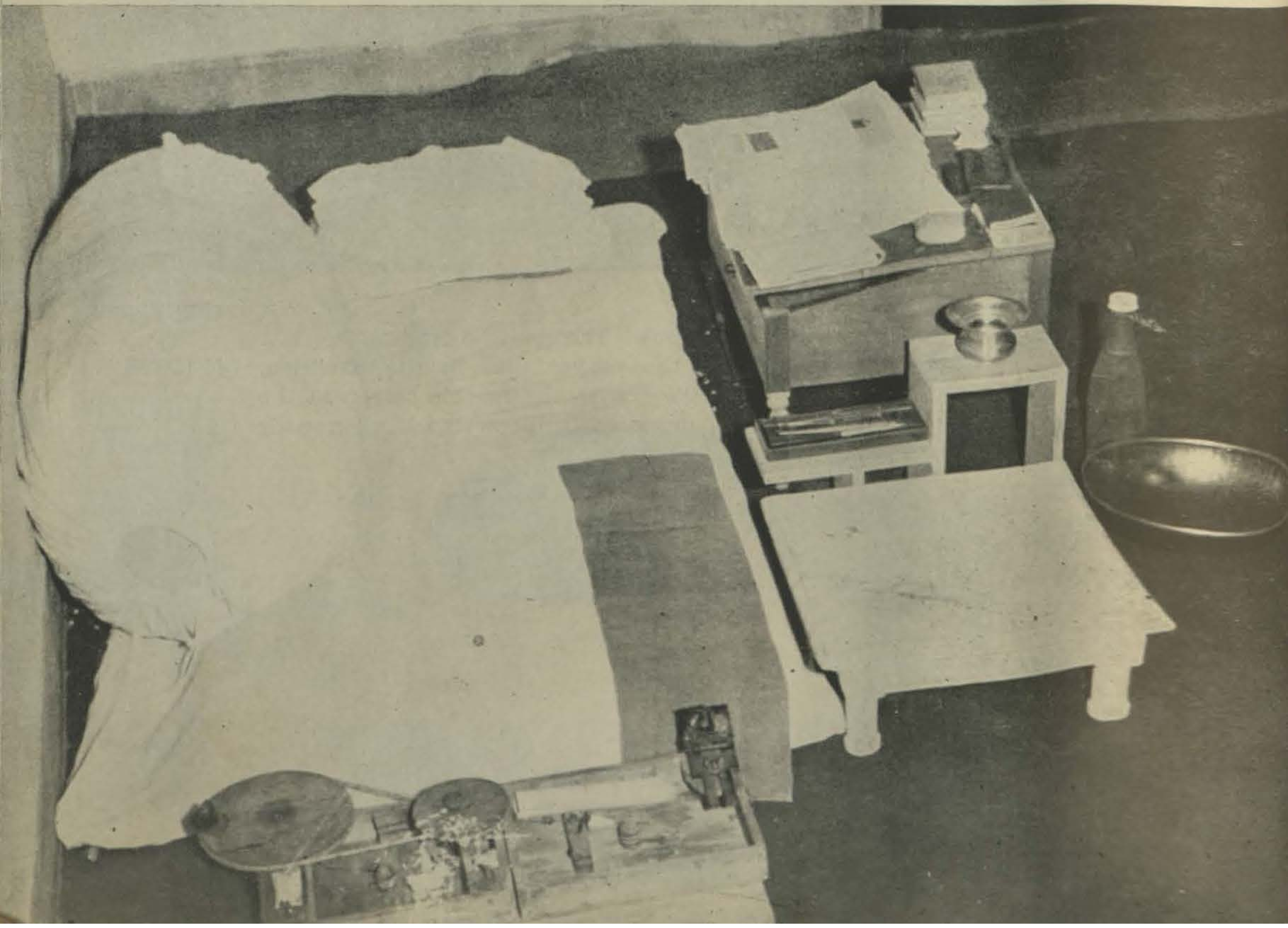
(Top) The prayer ground at Birla House. The path he trod on his last journey and the steps leading to the prayer dias in the pavillion. (Bottom) A closer view of the pavillion with the marble screen at the back through which it was at first proposed to throw the hand-granade to kill him.



Press Information Bureau, Govt. of India

(Left) His earthly possessions. (Below) His Empty seat in Birla House "which his presence...converted into the hub of the world."
(page 780)

Hindustan Time



sides of the railway track even in between the railway stations. The scene was reminiscent of Abraham Lincoln's funeral train going from Washington to Springfield, Illinois. Only the Mahatma was not being carried "home" as Lincoln's body was. His ashes were being carried to the Ganges, the holy mother, equaliser of beggars and kings, sinners and saints. Nor were the coaches painted black as in the case of the seven coaches of Lincoln's "lonesome train". Death in Hinduism is not the end of life, an occasion for mourning, but an occasion for heart-searching. The departed soul came into this world only to complete its striving before returning to the Almighty like an ocean drop back to the ocean to share its might and majesty by being reunited to it.

At Rasulabad, a small wayside railway station sixty miles from Allahabad, the train was brought to a halt and taken into a siding for the night. Exactly at the stroke of nine next morning, it steamed into the Allahabad railway station. The crowd here was unmanageable. The urn was placed on a decorated truck waiting outside. A mammoth crowd followed the truck from the railway station to the riverside. On the way, it stopped for a few minutes before a church as the congregation inside sang the Mahatma's favourite hymn, "Lead Kindly Light, Lead Thou Me On". At the riverside the urn containing the ashes was transferred from the flower-bedecked truck to a "duck". On the duck, among others, were Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel, Sarojini Naidu and her daughter, Maulana Azad and Govind Ballabh Pant, and the Mahatma's two sons Ramdas and Devadas. The amphibious landing craft sailed right into the middle of the stream where the white current of the Ganges joins the Jumna's blue flow. For some distance the two run side by side without mingling so as to be easily distinguishable from each other. Here, on the twelfth day of the cremation, what remained of the Mahatma's mortal remains was consigned to the sacred waters at the *Sangam*—the confluence of the Ganges, the Jumna and the Sarasvati, the three rivers whose names are inter-woven in the web of Indian history from time immemorial. Nearly three million people witnessed the ceremony from the river-bank, as to the chanting of the Vedic hymns the urn was emptied into the placid bosom of the river. He had "outsoared the shadow of the night" and passed from death into immortality. The river had emptied itself into the sea. The Mahatma had become one with the *Mahat*—the Supreme.

> The One remains; the many change and pass;
> Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly,
> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
> Until death tramples it to fragments.

CHAPTER XXV

EPILOGUE

1

SELDOM HAS a man's death evoked such widespread grief, sorrow and sense of personal loss among all classes and people as Gandhiji's. Some in India died of the shock; some tried to commit suicide, feeling there was nothing left for them in the world. Messages of condolence, sympathy and appreciation poured in from all quarters of the globe. There were messages from the King and Queen of England, President Truman, Mrs. Roosevelt, Pope Pius, the Arch-bishop of Canterbury, the Dalai Lama of Tibet, the President of France, and high functionaries and heads of various States. The Security Council of the United Nations Organisation interrupted its proceedings to pay homage to the Mahatma. Referring to him as "the friend of the poorest and lowliest and lost", Philip Noel-Baker, the British representative in the United Nations, said: "His greatest achievements are still to come."

The United Nations flag was flown at half-mast.

"Great men and eminent have monuments in bronze and marble set up for them," observed Pandit Nehru in the Indian Constituent Assembly three days after the great calamity, "but this man of divine fire . . . lives in the hearts of millions and he will live for immemorial ages. . . . In ages to come, centuries and may be millenniums after us, people will think of this generation when this man of God trod the earth."

Pearl Buck, the noted Nobel Prize winning author, described the Mahatma's death as "another crucifixion".

Particularly significant was the tribute paid by General Douglas MacArthur, supreme Allied military commander in Japan, all the more so as coming from a professional soldier. Describing Gandhiji as one of those prophets who lived "far ahead of the time", he said: "In the evolution of civilisation, if it is to survive, all men cannot fail eventually to adopt his belief that the process of mass application of force to resolve contentious issues is fundamentally not only wrong but contains within itself the germs of self-destruction."

A remarkable feature of the world-reaction to Gandhiji's death was the sense of bereavement it brought to people who had never met or even seen him. "I never saw Gandhi. . . . I do not know his language, I never set foot in his country," observed Leon Blum of France, "and yet I feel the same sorrow as if I had lost someone

near and dear. The whole world has been plunged into mourning by the death of this extraordinary man."

There was a spontaneous recognition among all peoples and races struggling for their rights that in him they had a champion of their cause and the symbol of their aspirations. "Gandhiji's life-work will always remain the brightest beacon and inspiration to Africans struggling for freedom," said the Negro leaders Joseph Mitchell, George Padmore and Richard Hard. The American Negro woman leader, Mrs. Mary Bethune, said: "A great warm light has been extinguished. . . . His spirit reached for the stars and sought to win a world without gun or bayonet or blood. . . . As we, mothers of the earth, stand in awesome fear of the roar of jet planes, the crash of atom bombs and the unknown horrors of germ warfare, we must turn our eyes in hope to the East where the sun of the Mahatma blazes."

The New York Times commented: "He has left as his heritage, a spiritual force that must in God's good time prevail over arms and armaments and the dark doctrines of violence."

"There is still some hope for the world," wrote Albert Deutsch in the New York newspaper *PM*, "which reacted as reverently as it did to the death of Gandhi."

2

What message has Gandhiji for the present-day world, and what significance or validity has it in relation to the question of questions that faces us today?

The world today stands uneasily poised on the brink of a catastrophe. Science has given man almost unlimited control over natural forces. But it has not taught him how to control himself. No easy way has yet been found of reforming human nature. The eradication of the primordial passions of hatred and fear, lust and greed, possessiveness, anger and egotism that lurk beneath the thin veneer of our culture and civilisation continues to be as slow, labourious and uphill a task as it ever was. Evil has taken wings but good continues to walk at the proverbial snail's pace.

This lop-sided development of man threatens our entire future. The discovery of the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb has for the first time brought the extinction of all life and the destruction of our planet itself by the undisciplined mind of man within the range of possibility. It is, as Jung put it, as if a little boy of six were given dynamite amongst his birthday presents. "How can we save the child," he asks, "from the dynamite that nobody can take away from him? The good spirit of humanity is challenged as never before. . . . It is now a question of existence or non-existence."[1]

How can the peril be countered? Is there a power that can control

power and yet will not, "like the military power, which is all we have today to put against the might of the aggressors", frustrate itself? And if so, what is its nature; how can it be evoked, harnessed and put to use? That is the question to which, like the Riddle of the Sphinx, civilisation must find an answer, or perish. "It is time, high time," Jung warns, "that civilised man turned his mind to the fundamental things."[2]

The atom bomb is the ultimate of brute force. But, as Gandhiji pointed out, "behind the death-dealing bomb there is the human hand that releases it, and behind that still, is the human heart that sets the hand in motion."[3] The final battle for the survival of civilisation and perhaps of the human race itself has thus to be fought in the psyche of man which is "in the last resort . . . the place of origin of all action, and therefore everything which happens by the will of man."[4] If we could control the psyche of the individual, who manipulates atomic power, it should give us the power to control the diabolical power which the run-away science of man threatens to unleash.

Science has taught us to think in terms of causality (law of cause and effect) but somehow we are inclined to think that while the law of causality holds good in respect of the physical world, phenomena pertaining to the world of the spirit lie outside its operation. This is illogical and inconsistent with the fundamental premiss of science which postulates the existence of an all-embracing ultimate principle that will interpret and explain the entire range of phenomena within human experience. "Science is nothing but the finding of unity."[5] "Unity. . . is the necessary hypothesis upon which the constructions of science rest."[6]

There is only one Reality. The law, therefore, cannot be in two sections—one applying to the world of matter, the other to the world of spirit. The same law must hold good in respect of both the hemispheres of what constitutes an integral whole.

"Nature speaks in symbols and in signs," sang Whittier. "The laws of the inner psychic substance are of necessity the same as those of outside reality," affirms that great savant and philosopher Romain Rolland. "And if you succeed in reading one properly, the chances are that you will find the confirmation (if not, the presentiment) of what you have read or will read in the other."[7] He cites the testimony of Sir J.C. Bose, the celebrated botanist, that before he began an experiment with plants, he preconceived their reactions within himself. The same has been testified by other great scientists and experimenters—Leonardo De Vinci, Wallace and Faraday, to mention only a few. With poets and artists it is still more so. This would be inconceivable if in Nature's face were not hidden, as in a "code-script", the eternal laws that govern both matter and spirit; if physical laws had not their analogic counterpart in the spiritual world, both being alike

"... the workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;

Characters of the great Apocalypse.
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first and last and midst, and without end."

The ancient seers of India declared that macrocosm is reflected in the microcosm—*Yatha pinde tatha brahmande.* That which exists in the one must, therefore, exist equally in the other.

Einstein has given us his well-known equation setting forth the relationship between mass and energy which states that when even an infinitesimal particle of matter attains the velocity of light, the maximum velocity attainable in the physical world, it acquires a mass which is infinite. The corresponding law governing the release of spiritual energy is to be found in the formula enunciated by Gandhiji, viz. that even an infinitesimal of an individual, when he has realised the ideal of Ahimsa in its fullness so that in thought, word and deed, he—in short his whole being—becomes a function of Ahimsa as it were, he becomes filled with its power, the power of love, soul force, truth force, or the godhead within us, to which there is no limit and before which all hatred and opposition must cease: "With Satya combined with Ahimsa you can bring the world to your feet."[8] "When once it is set in motion its effect, if it is intensive enough, can overtake the whole universe."[9] Working under this law, indeed "one perfect civil resister (Satyagrahi) is enough to win the battle of Right against Wrong."[10] The condition is that he must have ceased to have a separate will of his own—by absolute surrender to the spirit of Truth which is God. Testified Gandhiji: "There comes a time when an individual becomes irresistible and his action becomes all-pervasive in its effect. This comes when he reduces himself to zero."[11]

He gave its rationale as follows: "If we shatter the chains of egotism and melt into the ocean of humanity, we share its majesty. To feel that we are something is to set up a barrier between God and ourselves; to cease feeling that we are something is to become one with God. A drop in the ocean partakes of the greatness of its parent, although it is unconscious of it. But it is dried up as soon as it enters upon an existence independent of the ocean. . . . God is continuously in action without resting for a single moment. If we . . . become one with Him, our activity must be as unwearied as His. There may be momentary rest in store for the drop which is separated from the ocean, but not for the drop in the ocean, which knows no rest. . . . As soon as we become one with the ocean in the shape of God, there is no more rest for us, nor indeed do we need rest any longer. Our very sleep is action. For we sleep with the thought of God in our hearts. This restlessness constitutes true rest. This never-ceasing agitation holds the key to peace ineffable. This supreme state of total surrender is difficult to describe, but not beyond the bounds of human experience. . . . All our obser-

vances and activities are calculated to assist us in reaching it. We shall reach it some day all unawares if we have truth in us."[12]

There is an ancient Indian philosophical doctrine that one who has lived the law of his essential being—truth as one knows it and which is natural to one's being—without a single deviation from it throughout his life, can cause anything to happen by the simple act of calling to witness the power of "God which is Truth and Truth which is God." Such a one becomes a "living conduit of cosmic powei, the power of truth (*satya*)", "the highest expression of the soul."[13] This is known as *sacchakriya* or making an "act of Truth". The Truth must be firmly rooted in the heart so that it manifests itself in action as infinite compassion or identification with everything that feels. "To realise God is to see Him in all that lives, i.e. to realise our oneness with all creation."[14]

3

H. G. Wells, in one of his writings, predicted that the coming years would be "essentially a century of Applied Psychology" which would "mark a revolution in human affairs altogether more profound . . . than that merely material revolution . . . amidst whose achievements we live."[15] But it is significant of our times that while the possibility of physical innovations, however startling, encounters no resistance in our mind, the very idea of the human spirit revealing a new dimension, a new faculty or a higher psychic power, is laughed out of court as a necromantic fantasy, at best an overwrought mystic's dream. Yet it is in some such development that the hope of the future lies. Our present dimensions, the greatest of living Indian philosophers, Dr. Radhakrishnan, reminds us, are not the ultimate limit of our being.

The *Upanishads* tell us that the Creator having created man, turned the windows of man's mind outward, extraverted his sense organs, so that he became cut off from communication with his inner being that constitutes his real self. This is another way of saying that man has, owing to his preoccupation more and more with the objective, visible world, the world of his senses, lost touch with the subjective, invisible, inner world of his psyche and its laws. His psychology has in consequence failed to keep pace with his physics and the very inventions that he has called into being today threaten to turn against and overwhelm him. It is necessary, therefore, a savant tells us, that "every insight into the outer world must be balanced by an equally enlarged knowledge of his (man's) true and full nature. . . . He must find a Moral Law which is just as objective, as the laws which he perceives in the physical realm" if society is to be saved.[16] This inner law may also be called the psychic law.

Recognition of law provides us with a sanction. Man could make no use of steam or electricity till he had by his intelligence mastered the laws governing them. Having done that, he can today harness them and they provide him with power. The inner universe of man, Gandhiji affirmed, is governed by laws that are as immutable, as self-sanctioning and capable of as precise and objective a handing as, for instance, the laws of motion that govern the world of matter. But we have neglected the science of the spirit. In the result, we are not able to make use of the vast store of spiritual or psychic energy lying dormant within us. This energy, Gandhiji maintained, is "more positive than electricity and more powerful than even ether". It has at the core of it a principle "which is self-acting".[17] Unconsciously, the bulk of mankind make use of this force in their daily life. It is the law of our being. But only conscious and intelligent practice of it can give us the power that we need to control power and make our psychology as practical as our physics. "When the practice of the law becomes universal," affirmed Gandhiji, "God will reign on earth as He does in Heaven. . . . Earth and heaven are in us. We know the earth, and we are strangers to the Heaven within us."[18]

The law will of course work whether we accept it or not. But "just as a scientist will work wonders out of various applications of the laws of nature, even so a man who applies the law of love with *scientific precision* can work greater wonders. . . Only our explorations have not gone far enough and so it is not possible for everyone to see all its working."[19] (Italics mine). It is our inertia or laziness, said Gandhiji, that stands in our way. "If we have made unexpected progress in physical sciences, why may we do less in the science of the soul?" he asks.[20] "There are many powers lying hidden within us. . . . We discover them by constant struggle. Even so may we find the Supreme Power if we make diligent search with the fixed determination to find Him."[21]

This, however, calls for an ampler psychology than is at present practised — a new science of the spirit — and far more delicate and subtler techniques than the sense-distracted mind of a man unpractised in the various spiritual disciplines can wield.

True practice of Ahimsa, Gandhiji held, calls for "the keenest intelligence" in one who practises it and "wide-awake" conscience. "One cannot be sure of the purity of one's intention until one has gone through the whole course of spiritual training laid down by masters of *yoga* like Patanjali. Perfect *chittashuddhi* (purification of the senses) cannot be achieved in any other way."[22]

As an integral part and foundation of Patanjali's system of *yoga* are the *yamas* and *niyamas*—cardinal spiritual disciplines and rules of conduct. Those who made experiments to discover the secret of the Supreme Power, which in individuals manifests itself as soul-force, averred

Gandhiji, came to the conclusion that there are certain conditions to be observed in making those experiments. "Just as for conducting scientific experiments there is an indispensable scientific course of instruction, in the same way, strict preliminary discipline is necessary to qualify a person to make experiments in the spiritual realm."[23] It was on the observance of these disciplines that Gandhiji's whole life was based. It made every activity of his, whether individual or institutional, social, economic or political, an experiment in the practice of these disciplines and a means for attaining perfection in the same.

The rock-bottom foundation of the technique for achieving the power of non-violence is belief in the essential oneness of all life. Individual psyches have been likened to innumerable coral reefs widely separated each from the other by the circumambient ocean but all united with one another at the base on the ocean floor from which they are sprung. The achievement of soul force depends on re-establishing our unity consciously with all psyches which manifestly exists beneath the threshold of individual consciousness and communicating that experience to others.

"I believe in *advaita*," declared Gandhiji. "I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent."[24] When this is taken as not merely text-book philosophy but is practised as a living faith, certain inevitable results follow. To quote Gandhiji: "Whenever I see an erring man, I say to myself, I have also erred; when I see a lustful man, I say to myself, so was I once; and in this way I feel kinship with every one in the world and feel that I cannot be happy without the humblest of us being happy."[25]

"By their fruits ye shall know them." The fruit of the spirit, declared St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness." To one who has realised oneness of all life, the practice of the law of forgiveness and of vicarious suffering becomes his second nature. Sustained practice provides in the intensest and most vivid form a dramatisation of the experience of this wider consciousness and thereby becomes a means for communicating the same to others so that any injury done to another is seen and felt to be as hurt or injury done to oneself and vice versa.

Thus the individual may be brought back to a recognition of his essential oneness with his fellows from which he has been alienated by his ceaseless pursuit of ego-centered sense-activities, and to the law of his being restored, the self-sanctioning quality which should belong to it in common with the physical laws. When Gandhiji forgave and suffered for the love of those who did wrong, they all suffered with him and not only they but humanity at large in every part of the world. And the secret of it was his ceaseless, unrelenting

practice of the law of love "which sublimates all possessiveness as well as all desires" and of which the five cardinal observances or basic spiritual disciplines are five natural sub-sections "or five test points in what is a single commandment, viz. to love all mankind as oneself." It made his whole life an "act of truth".

4

Ours has been called the psychic age. "The gigantic catastrophes that threaten *us*," observes Jung, ". . . are psychic events . . . . Man is exposed today to the elemental forces of his own psyche."[26] Wars and such upheavals of violence are in their fundamental nature "psychic epidemics". Behind these phenomena is the individual neurosis and the mass neurosis that afflicts our age.

The dividing line between the normal and the abnormal individual is notoriously thin. It is common knowledge, psychiatrists tell us that "only the very smallest fraction of so-called psychopaths lands in the asylum. The overwhelming majority constitutes . . . 'normal' part of the population."[27] But when these very people congregate together, "abnormal phenomena appear." The outcrop of dictatorships and totalitarianism which the world has of late witnessed, is an outward symbol of an inner pathological condition of man that has become general. The increase in the material means of existence, which the march of invention has made possible, unaccompanied by an adequate end, has given rise to a psychic imbalance of which "the spectre of futility and frustration" that haunts society, "the boredom that drives men to drink, drugs and the mass murder of war"[28] are some of the concomitant symptoms.

Totalitarianism represents a "compensatory move" of the unconscious. "The individual's feeling of weakness, and indeed non-existence" is "compensated by the upheaval of desire for power."[29] The individual becomes a dictator and a totalitarian "because he cannot live without an end adequate to control and to express his means. . . . Hence he strives to create out of his nation a being in which he may experience a pre-individual solidarity"[30] which he misses within himself.

Reason by itself is not very helpful in such a case. "The intellect —that handy man—can put it this way and in quite a different way too."[31] But when even one man comes forth with "objective, psychic fact" of his experience, "hard as granite and heavy as lead", he becomes a liberating force, a beacon light to all. It was this quality that gave to Gandhiji's utterances and even unuttered thoughts, signs, gestures, even silences, the power of direct action so that they partook of the nature of historic events. His power of inspiring confidence and

swaying the minds of men was rooted in the depth, intensity and fullness of his inner experience.

What our era needs above all is such a "liberating personality". There is a saying of a Chinese Master which runs: "When the enlightened man is alone and thinks rightly, he can be heard a thousand miles away."

The Upanishadic theory of cosmic evolution by extraversion states that when the One willed Himself to become many, one part of the primal consciousness became differentiated as the individual psyche, the other evolved into the senses and the sense organs. Put in the language of modern psychology, this would mean that at some stage of its evolution man's individual psyche underwent a fragmentation, or, as Gerald Heard has put it, suffered a double fracture. As a result, one aspect of it became "fore-conscious" and developed into the inventive faculty, the other, the unmanifest, became the sunken or submerged continent of the subconscious. The second fracture came when the individual psyche, becoming more and more ego-bound, lost the pre-individual awareness of its essential oneness with all psyches. Neurosis is "self division". The fragmentation of the individual psyche into two parts, cut off and estranged from each other, set up a conflict inside the individual and made him neurotic. The loss of awareness of the essential oneness of all life sowed the seed of social conflict, which could be controlled only by an increasing use of external sanctions—culminating in the advent of the atom bomb.

The three problems that face us today thus are: (1) How can the individual regain the sense of his wholeness so that he ceases to be neurotic? (2) How can we regain awareness of our essential oneness with our fellows—an awareness as keen as our awareness of the world of visible things? (3) How can a non-violent sanction for society be developed that will take the place of external sanctions by which society is at present regulated, and enable us to do away with them?

Gandhiji's answer to these questions is: (1) By the practice of the gospel of selfless action we can shake off the dominance of our senses or the "fore-conscious" aspect of our being. Thus would the different levels of our being be reunited and man cease to be at war with himself. (2) By sustained practice of the law of love we can re-establish our essential unity with our fellows, and by building a social order based upon the practice of that principle we can communicate that experience of unifying consciousness to the people at large. (3) By progressive identification with all that lives, we can re-establish communion with the transcendental psychic substance "which is not capable of existing in the plural" and of which all individual psyches are specialised forms. By so doing, we become the vehicle of the Power of Truth, the Ultimate Reality which alone

is and besides which all else is naught. This power, otherwise known as the power of Ahimsa, love, or soul force should give us the non-violent sanction which will enable us to cope with the forces of violence that threaten us and civilisation.

5

Gandhiji described the science of Satyagraha, as conceived by him, as a "science in the making".[32] He did not claim to have worked it out in its entirety. In fact, he maintained, "it does not lend itself to such treatment. So far as I know, no single physical science does, not even the very exact science of mathematics."[33] Partly for this reason, he discouraged attempts to formulate it into a system in his lifetime. The practice of Satyagraha turns upon certain basic assumptions which by their very nature can neither be proved nor disproved. Their validity can be tested only by experience. It is the same in mathematics. "Irrational numbers", square root of a minus quantity for instance, cannot be visualised. Nor can their meaning be expressed in logical terms but only by the use of symbols. They, however, help us to solve problems in applied science by the manipulation of those symbols. Similarly, the truth of the fundamental concepts on which the practice of Satyagraha is based has to be experienced before we can make use of its power in mundane affairs.

"I have often said," Gandhiji once observed, ". . . that even if all our scriptures were to perish, one *mantra* of *Ishopanishad* was enough to declare the essence of Hinduism. But even that one verse will be of no avail if there is no-one to live it."[34]

This was what Gandhiji meant when he said that non-violence cannot be preached. It has to be lived. Some of his outstanding contributions to the development of its techniques can, however, be gleaned from his life and writings.

(1) The acquisition of the spirit of non-resistance is admittedly "a matter of long training in self-denial and appreciation of the hidden forces within ourselves."[35] How can its practice then be brought within the capacity of the people at large? Whilst it was true, said Gandhiji, that the "votaries" alone, i.e. "the few who take the vow of non-possession and the allied abstinences" could "*carry on research work and declare from time to time the new possibilities of the great eternal law governing man, if it is a law, it must hold good for all.*"[36] (Italics mine).

It was the hall-mark of Gandhiji's genius that he discovered ways of working out perfectionist goals through imperfect tools, which has been the bug-bear of idealists in all ages. The core of his discovery was that all need not possess "the same measure of conscious non-resistance for its full operation. It is enough for

one person only to possess it even as one General is enough to regulate and dispose of the energy of millions of soldiers who enlist under his banner, even though they know not the why and the wherefore of his dispositions."[37] Thus, thousands of men and women who took part in Salt Satyagraha were not free from anger and hate in their daily conduct; they were very imperfect human beings. "Their belief in non-violence was unintelligent. . . . But their belief in their leaders was genuine."[38] And that, said Gandhiji, was enough. They harboured no ill-will towards anyone when they collected contraband salt in their numbers. Their soldierly discipline linked to the General's *sadhana* of non-violence made them formidable.

With those, however, who lead, it is a different matter. "Their belief has got to be intelligent and they have to live up to all the implications of the belief."[39]

As Gandhiji advanced farther and farther into his researches, he was led to lay increasing emphasis on the cultivation of individual perfection as the key to the organisation and release of the power of non-violence of the masses. "In the battle of non-violence," he told Norman Cliff of the *News Chronicle*, "it has been single individuals who have been able most effectively to demonstrate the potency of non-violence." To Mirabehn he explained: Ahimsa is unmanifest. "People cannot realise the unmanifest. When spirit becomes flesh, then they can see and understand it."[40] Hence the need to "become Ahimsa-made-flesh."

(2) Psyche is a whole. It is so constituted that "everything" in it is "connected with everything else".[41] It cannot therefore be dealt with sectionally. The striving for non-violence must embrace every field of the striver's life. Principle among these is the domestic field where "the alphabet of Ahimsa is best learnt."[42] It is here that a beginning has to be made. We are all at times apt to act like little dictators in our homes. It is not therefore lack of will but capacity that distinguishes us from the totalitarians and dictators on a bigger scale. We have to take the beam out of our own eye before we can point out with any effect the mote in that of another. The discipline of non-violence has to show in our domestic relationships before its influence can make itself felt outside.

(3) Next comes the economic sphere. The striving for non-violence consists in self-transcendence. But our society is today so constituted that it can keep its economy going only by multiplying wants, i.e. by inflaming desire. Based as it is on competition, greed and fear, it forces upon the individual values which reduce his life to a denial in action of the goal of self-transcendence. It was for this reason that the Buddha laid such stress on "right livelihood".[43] In recent times John Woolman, the American Quaker, refrained from selling West Indian sugar and rum to customers who came to his

shop because these things were the products of slave labour. He made his journeys on foot because driving in a horse carriage would have indirectly made him party to the inhuman treatment that was meted out to horses and to post boys in his days. "As well hope to continue evolution (towards the goal of attaining wider consciousness) in our competitive society where the aims are to satisfy the ego and to stabilise it by addictions, possessions, pretensions," observes Gerald Heard, "as to rear from seed, orchids in the arctic." For humanity to reach its goal of a higher psychic evolution is needed a society based on the practice of the law of love—a society in which not individual gain but service of one's fellows as a means of self-transcendence is the essential motive of all activities (see Vol. I, pages 539-49).

To provide in miniature a working model of this type of society and a demonstration of the cardinal spiritual disciplines in action, on which the practice of non-violence is based, Gandhiji instituted the Ashram way of life or community living. It was the means he used to introduce among the people, the leaven of basic spiritual disciplines, which provided the energy and drive for Satyagraha campaigns. Very imperfect models these Ashrams were. Even so they served to create a new climate wherever they sprang up. The practice of the law of love even in infinite dilutions, when embodied in the lives of the millions, Gandhiji found, alters the basic pattern of reactions of all concerned on either side of the combat line and in its cumulative effect produces results that are astounding. It was the Ashrams that had sprung up all over the country which helped Gandhiji to organise and sustain his non-violent campaigns during India's fight for freedom. Wherever there was an Ashram, people learnt the secret of Satyagraha; wherever there was a Satyagraha campaign, there sprang up Ashrams in its wake. They set not only the pattern of the type of the worker that was needed for organising his non-violent mass movements but of the non-violent type of organisation, too, so much so that, as Gandhiji put it, whatever institution he took up—whether it was the Congress, Harijan Sevak Sangh, or a nature-cure home—he turned it into the likeness of an Ashram.

(4) In the days of old, so runs the ancient Indian tradition, whenever all ordinary means failed people resorted to *tapasya*—penance. Gandhiji defined *tapasya* as "single-minded devotion" and striving, which sublimates or consumes every other longing or desire, in the pursuit of an ideal. "*Tapasya* is of various kinds. Misguided men can resort to it. . . . The wise also can do it. . . . It was by dint of *tapasya* that Western scientists made their discoveries."[41]

The *tapasya* that will "quicken the conscience of those who believe in Ahimsa," said Gandhiji, "is the fulfilment of . . . constructive programme. . . . Those who will carry it out in faith, in full

knowledge, and without the slightest fuss will have done their share in the *tapasya* to quench the conflagration."[45]

"Even if there is one individual who is almost completely non-violent," Gandhiji had maintained, "he can put out the conflagration."[46] This, however, is a *tapasya* which very few can perform. He therefore suggested a *tapasya* in accordance with the spirit of our times which could easily be performed by the people at large. "In this age of democracy it is essential that desired results are achieved by the collective effort of the people. It will no doubt be good to achieve an objective through the effort of a supremely powerful individual, but it can never make the community conscious of its corporate strength. An individual's success will be like a millionaire doling free food to millions of starving people. We should, therefore, bend our energies to the fulfilment of . . . constructive programme."[47]

(5) "Anything that millions can do together," Gandhiji said, "becomes charged with a unique power."[48] The condition is that it should be instinct with meaning, i.e. a purposive awareness on the doer's part, otherwise it becomes a fetish. To provide a day-to-day exercise in self-transcendence and transvaluation of values, in however limited a measure, and as a means of identification with the least, Gandhiji instituted universal sacramental spinning. "This thing has come in my search after the technique of non-violence," he declared referring to the spinning-wheel. "And each day that passes makes my faith brighter."[49] He carried into it the same spirit of experimental research and scientific precision as characterised his practice of other spiritual observances. "The wheel as such is lifeless but when I invest it with symbolism, it becomes a living thing for me. Its sound, if it is musical, is in tune with non-violence. If it is unmusical, it is not in tune with it, for it indicates carelessness on my part."[50] One had, therefore to be "meticulously careful about every part of the wheel." Then and then only would spinning be "a true sacrificial act."[51]

(6) As occupational therapy for their psychic illness, the spinning wheel, said Gandhiji, could be taken up by the people of the West with the greatest benefit. An American Press correspondent, Andrew Freeman, who had been attending the spinning classes started by Gandhiji in the Bhangi Colony at the time of the Cabinet Mission's negotiations in 1946, once asked him: "Has the spinning-wheel a message for America? Can it serve as a counter-weapon to the atom bomb?"

"I do feel," replied Gandhiji, "that it has a message for . . . the whole world. . . . The world is spinning in the wrong direction. It must reverse itself and spin its own thread and yarn. It must return to handicrafts produced at home and thereby repudiate the machine that spawned the device by which mankind can destroy itself. Hand-spinning is the beginning of the economic freedom, equality and peace.

The saving of the entire world lies in the adoption of this little device. Peace will not come from the big conferences. World peace has been broken even while the conferences were going on. Peace must come from the people."

"If any country can really take up the wheel," put in the interviewer, "it is India. Do you think it will?"

"I confess the process is very slow," replied Gandhiji. ". . . But everything is possible for God. If there is no living power called God, the spinning-wheel has no place."

"As a fairly intelligent human being and an American," the correspondent resumed, "I can only say that though many Americans would call spinners cranks, there are not a few who are thinking hard. Something has to be found, that would save civilisation from destruction. Life must be simplified."

"Human personality cannot be sustained in any other way," replied Gandhiji. "All must have equal opportunity. Given the opportunity, every human being has the same possibility for spiritual growth. That is what the spinning-wheel symbolises."

"I propose to interpret the Charkha to Americans as a 'thinking machine'," Gandhiji's interviewer finally remarked. "I found while I was attending my spinning class that if I was alone with it, it made me think. If only Americans could get down to spin, they might be able to do some thinking for which otherwise they get no time. It might make them forget the atom bomb."

(7) Man is a symbol using animal. Symbols enable us to communicate what words cannot. They are the means by which "one stratum of the personality signals to another." In dreams, for instance, "the subconscious mind seems to be signalling to the conscious mind"[52] by means of dream symbolism.

In ritual, the process is reversed. Ritual, i.e. action symbolising an idea, enables "the conscious mind and emotions to communicate with and act upon the subliminal." A familiar illustration of this is the institution of flag salutation to inculcate patriotism on the citizens, and of the military salute to inculcate on the soldiers the habit of discipline and unquestioning obedience. Both ritual and symbols help us toward " a more complete integration of different levels of our being."[53] They help to release the tremendous power embodied in the aspects of the Reality which they represent. A more elementary illustration of the use of outward symbols is when we use a moving target instead of a live object to give training in fire-arms. "You shoot at boards, then at targets, then at beasts. Then you are passed as an expert in the art of destruction."[54] The practice of violence can thus be taught to people by the help of outward symbols. Ritual and outward symbols have their use in the inculcation of Ahimsa too, but by

themselves they are not enough. "The non-violent man has no outward weapon and, therefore, not only his speech but his action also seems ineffective. I may say all kinds of sweet words to you without meaning them. On the other hand, I may have real love in me and yet my outward expression may be forbidding. Then outwardly my action in both cases may be the same and yet the effect may be different. For the effect of our action is often more potent when it is not patently known. . . . It is, nevertheless, infinitely greater than the conscious effect."[55] To inculcate Ahimsa one has to go beyond speech, even beyond action, to what lies behind action—the significance of action in terms of identification with the universal essence, Ultimate Reality in which we are all united—the source of all knowledge and of all power, the power that accrues to him who has merged himself with it. Knowledge is a function of being. But "the world is too much with us." We are as a result alienated from the truth which is within us. But, affirms Gandhiji, "we have lost the paradise only to regain it."[56] To regain it is man's prerogative and birth right. In an answer to Meno's question in Plato's *Dialogues* whether virtue is to be taught, Socrates answers that virtue is not taught. It is "recollected". Recollection is "a getting of one's self together, a retreat into one's soul."[57] To impart inwardness to the practice of non-violence, Gandhiji instituted individual and mass prayer and mass singing of God's name to the accompaniment of *tal* (see Vol. I, pages 162–63). "Muddy water let stand becomes clear," observed Laotze. "One discovers truth," said Gandhiji, "and the method of applying the only legitimate means of vindicating it, i.e. Satyagraha or soul force, by patient endeavour and silent prayer."[58] In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan " in the silence of the prayer we touch the deeper layers of being", where to each is " revealed the living presence of God. . . according to his capacity and need."[59]

It was Gandhiji's claim that for over fifty years he had practised non-violence with "scientific precision" and he knew of not one single case in which it had failed. Where it seemed sometime to have failed, the failure was not that of the principle but of the experimenter, i.e. himself. "When I have become incapable of evil and when nothing harsh or haughty occupies, be it momentarily, my thought-world, then, and not till then, my non-violence will move all the hearts of all the world."[60]

"But this kind of *sadhana* might take thousands of years," it was put to him. He did not agree. "It may take some a thousand years, and it may take some others only one year. Don't think that if in spite of my fifty years' practice of it I am still imperfect, it must take you many more years. No, there is no rule of three here. You may succeed quicker than I."[61]

Far from being discouraged, said Gandhiji, he saw in his imperfections, God's purpose at work for the advancement of Ahimsa. "My imperfections and failures are as much a blessing from God as my successes and my talents, and I lay them both at His feet. Why should He have chosen me, an imperfect instrument, for such a mighty experiment? I think He deliberately did so. He had to serve the poor dumb ignorant millions. A perfect man might have been their despair. When they found that one with their failings was marching on towards Ahimsa, they too had confidence in their own capacity. We should not have recognised a perfect man if he had come as our leader, and we might have driven him to a cave. Maybe he who follows me will be more perfect and you will be able to receive his message."[62]

He had not a shadow of a doubt that "the world of tomorrow will be—must be a society based on non-violence."[63] "I belong to the tribe of Columbus and Stevenson," he grimly declared.[64] "If I have erred at all it has been in the company of the most distinguished scientists in all ages and all climes." What scientist worthy of the name ever complained of the ruthless accuracy and precision which the success of his experiments demanded, or allowed himself to be deterred by difficulties and failures? "Thousand like myself may die to vindicate the ideal but Ahimsa will never die and the gospel of Ahimsa can be spread only through believers dying for the cause."[65]

6

It has been argued that the weapon of non-violence can be of avail only when the power opposing it is susceptible to moral appeal, but is of no use against totalitarian dictators—monsters in human form—who have made themselves impervious to world opinion and are incapable of pity or moral response of any kind. Would it not be playing into the hands of these dictators, it is asked, to confront them with non-violence, seeing that they are un-moral by definition?

In reply to this Gandhiji reiterates that non-violence does not depend for its working upon the sufferance or goodwill of the tyrant. It is self-sustained. "Belief in non-violence is based on the assumption that human nature in the essence is one and therefore unfailingly responds to the advances of love. . . . A non-violent resister depends upon the unfailing assistance of God which sustains him throughout difficulties which would otherwise be considered insurmountable. His faith makes him indomitable."[66]

Non-violent resistance is much more active than violent resistance, maintained Gandhiji. "It is direct, ceaseless, but three-fourths invisible and only one-fourth visible. In its visibility, it seems to be ineffective . . . but it is really intensely active and most effective in

ultimate result. . . . A violent man's activity is most visible, while it lasts. But it is always transitory. . . . Hitler . . . Mussolini . . . and Stalin . . . are able to show the immediate effectiveness of violence. But it will be as transitory as that of Chenghis' slaughter. But the effects of Buddha's non-violent action persist and are likely to grow with age. And the more it is practised, the more effective and inexhaustible it becomes, and ultimately the whole world stands agape and exclaims, 'a miracle has happened.' All miracles are due to the silent and effective working of invisible force. Non-violence is the most invisible and the most effective."[67]

To take an instance from history, it was not lack of will or confidence in his capacity to annihilate that "dark, contemptible, superstitious heresy"—as Christianity was then known—that stayed Nero's hand, when he started burning Christian heretics alive to illuminate the nocturnal garden sports of Rome, or throwing them to gladiators and hungry lions in the Colosseum to make a Roman holiday. Enlightened public opinion of his day was wholly against the new sect. To exterminate Christians like a pest was regarded as a laudable and meritorious act of public service. They were regarded as by nature corrupt and steeped in sedition; enemies of the State and of true religion. No anti-Jewish diatribe of Goebbels or Streicher could exceed in virulence or cold-blooded hatred the words put by Anatole France into the mouth of Pontius Pilate, which very correctly reflect the historical attitude of Roman proconsuls towards the early Christians.[68] Nor were the Christians sufficiently numerous or important to employ "embarrassment tactics" successfully. And their persecutors knew it. Had they actually decided upon their extermination, nothing could have prevented them from it. And yet they did not, because they could not.[69]

So baffling, so subtle, so novel in character and contrary to all that they had so long recognised or were familiar with was this new force that in the face of it they did not know what to do. And before they were aware of it, it, like a hidden leavan, permeated and transformed the entire mass. The triumphant smile on the face of the Christian martyr, as he proceeded calmly to the stake to be burnt alive, at first surprised, then exasperated and finally undermined and overwhelmed the complaisance and smug self-confidence of the proud patrician. The javelin-proof coat-of-mail of the Roman cohorts was not proof against this subtle force. It insinuated itself secretly into the families of the high and mighty and finally gained a footing even in the Imperial household itself.

Coming to our times, overwhelming scientific testimony as to the superiority of the power of non-violence is furnished by that great savant Prince Kropotkin in his *Mutual Aid: As a Factor in Evolution*. He cites in corroboration the testimony of Charles Darwin that in wild nature,

where there is not any curb or check upon the destructive propensities of the strong, the "fittest to survive are not the physically strongest nor the cunningest but those who learn to combine so as mutually to support each other." Species of birds "which have an almost ideal organisation for robbery," he shows ". . . decay, while other species . . . which practise mutual help . . . thrive." In the long run "the cunningest and the shrewdest are eliminated in favour of those who understand the advantages of social life and mutual support." Sociability proves to be the chief factor of evolution "both directly, by securing the well-being of the species while diminishing the waste of energy and indirectly, by favouring the growth of intelligence." Evolution of compassion as a necessary outcome of social life makes for a considerable advance in general intelligence and sensibility. "It is . . . a powerful factor of further evolution."

The same is borne out by the observations of Konrad Z. Lorenz. That great naturalist has piled instance upon instance in his *King Solomon's Ring* to show how, even where the law of jungle prevails, it is the meek that inherit the earth. He takes that symbol of cruelty and voraciousness, the wolf. When an enormous old timber wolf and a rather weaker one engage in an uninhibited fight the one who is beaten offers unprotected to his enemy the bend of his neck, the most vulnerable part of his whole body! "Less than an inch from the tensed neck-muscle, where the jugular vein lies immediately beneath the skin, gleam the fangs of his antagonist from beneath the wickedly retracted lips. . . . Every second you expect violence and await with bated breath the moment when the winner's teeth will rip the jugular vein of the loser. But . . . the victor will definitely not close on his less fortunate rival. You can see that he would like to but he just cannot! A dog or wolf that offers its neck to its adversary in this way will never be bitten seriously."[70]

Similarly in the case of turkeys: "If a turkey-cock has had more than his share of the wild and grotesque wrestling-match in which these birds indulge, he lays himself with outstretched neck upon the ground. Whereupon the victor behaves exactly as a wolf or dog in the same situation, that is to say, he evidently *wants* to peck and kick at the prostrated enemy, but simply cannot: he would if he could but he can't!"[71]

Whatever may be the reasons, the author comments, "that prevent the dominant individual from injuring the submissive one, whether he is prevented from doing so by a simple and purely mechanical reflex process or by a highly philosophical moral standard, is immaterial to the practical issue. The essential behaviour of the submissive as well as of the dominant partner remains the same: the humbled creature suddenly seems to lose his objections to being injured and removes all obstacles from the path of the killer, and it would seem

that very removal of these outer obstacles raises an insurmountable inner obstruction in the central nervous system of the aggressor."[72]

This "inner obstruction" to killing in the face of non-resistance is the device that nature has evolved for the survival of the species. Not the adoption of deadlier and deadlier armaments but the shedding of them is thus, it would seem, the law of survival.

In an interview with *New York Times* correspondent at a time when the democracies were faced with a crisis, Gandhiji suggested simultaneous disarmament on the part of the democratic powers as a solution. "I am as certain," he said, "as I am sitting here that this would open Hitler's eyes and disarm him." "Would not it be a miracle?" Gandhiji's interviewer asked. Gandhiji replied: "Perhaps. But it would save the world from the butchery which seems impending." "The hardest metal yields to sufficient heat; even so must the hardest heart melt before the sufficiency of the heat of non-violence. And there is no limit to the capacity of non-violence to generate heat . . . . During my half-century of experience I have not yet come across a situation when I had to say that I was helpless, that I had no remedy in terms of non-violence."[73]

Today when the choice before us is not between victory or defeat for one side or the other but between existence or non-existence of civilisation and perhaps of the human species itself, this wise, courageous and eminently practical counsel of one who had the rare gift of seeing into the heart of things before anyone else had even a suspicion of it, is worthy of the most prayerful consideration of those who are guiding the destinies of nations.

What about those thousands of Jews and others who perished in the incinerators and gas chambers of the Nazi Germany? it may be asked. What did their non-violence avail them? The answer to this question is perhaps a counter question: Did those who perish at the hands of the Nazis really practise true non-violence — the non-violence of the strong? Did the victims of Nazi tyranny, like the Christian martyrs of old, meet their doom with that smile on their face, that forgiveness, faith and love in their hearts, which it was, historians have testified, that planted in the hearts of the Roman Legionaries those obstinate questionings which ultimately undermined the foundation of the Roman Empire? Or, did they go down with an unuttered curse on their lips, and an impotent passion for revenge in their hearts? "Non-violence of the weak is bad. But the violence of the impotent—impotent violenee—is worse."[74] This may sound harsh but the law is inexorable. When the hardening of the heart is the result of a long, accumulated sense of injustice, real or fancied, it calls for a commensurate volume of innocent suffering of the purest type to neutralise it. If, therefore, non-violence may, at times, not seem to work, it will only mean that

more of it was needed and of greater purity.

Not even the worst criminal of history, Jung reminds us, need be regarded as beyond redemption. Even in the best of us "and just because it is the best, the seed of evil lies, and nothing is so bad but that some good could come of it."[75] It is a well-known phenomenon known to psychiatrists that " when a pendulum swings so violently in one direction, it is capable of reaching just as far on the opposite side. . . the minus-value is balanced by a plus value."[76] We have St. Paul's celebrated saying, where sin is great, grace doth "much more abound." The same was reiterated by Gandhiji to his numerous audiences during his "repentance tour" in Bihar: "The greater the sinner, the greater the saint."

Our feeling of helplessness in the face of the challenge of brute force arises, Gandhiji said, from "our deliberate dismissal of God from our common affairs. . . . Our daily life is a negation of God."[77] "Peace is unattainable by part performance of conditions, even as chemical combination is impossible without complete fulfilment of conditions of attainment thereof."[78] Dictators regard with contempt those who do not come to them with clean hands, who are not themselves free from the vices which they condemn in others, and who have not shed violence, exploitation and imperialism in every shape or form. They never had any experience of genuine Ahimsa. "They have up to now always found ready response to the violence that they have used. Within their experience, they have not come across organised non-violent resistance on an appreciable scale, if at all. Therefore, it is not only highly likely, but I hold it to be inevitable, that they would recognise the superiority of non-violent resistance over any display of violence that they may be capable of putting forth."[79]

An elephant maddened by an excruciating toothache will viciously attack anyone who tries blunderingly to administer to him. But he will allow an experienced vet to operate on him and is grateful when he is cured. Abnormal psychopathic individuals—dictators, oppressors and the like are sick souls. In the words of Gerald Heard: "Physically fit, their psychological sickness grows and must grow. They need ... any who can really 'minister to a mind diseased'. . . . They despise and destroy the pleasure-loving, comfort-seeking democracies and the vagrant and uncertain mystics and the passionate revolutionaries and even the gentle apostles of world-wide goodwill. But the service and assistance of one who knows more about the mind than they do, and who can save them from what the closest surveillance of their secret police cannot, their self-haunting nature in the darkness and loneliness of the night—such service and assistance they could crave."[80] Chenghis, he reminds us, "sent for a Taoist master and listened when the master rebuked him."[81] And has not a Greek

chronicler recorded how the Macedonian confessed that he had found in Dandamis, the Indian sage, "old and naked" though he was, "the only antagonist in whom he, the conqueror of many nations, had met more than his match"?[82]

We have as yet barely touched the hem of the garment. Half a century "is nothing in discovering the hidden possibilities of this force and working them out," said Gandhiji.[83] "Modern science is replete with illustrations of the seemingly impossible having become possible within living memory. But the victories of physical science would be nothing against the victory of the Science of Life, which is summed up in Love which is the Law of our Being."[84] Ahimsa, he maintained, "is the strongest force known. We have not been able yet to discover the true measure of the innumerable properties of an article of daily use like water. . . . Let us not, therefore, make light of a force of the subtlest kind like Ahimsa and let us try to discover its hidden power with patience and faith. . . . It is difficult to forecast the possibilities when men with unflinching faith carry this experiment further forward. . . . Our usual experience is that in most cases non-violence is the real antidote of violence, and it is safe to infer from it that the highest violence can be met by the highest non-violence."[85]

To the objection that the discipline which this calls for is perhaps too much to expect of human nature, he answers that no-one should dogmatise about the capacity of human nature for degradation or exaltation. "The usefulness of the non-violent method seems to be granted by all the critics (but) they gratuitously assume the impossibility of human nature, as it is constituted, responding to the strain involved in non-violent preparation. But that is begging the question. I say, 'You have never tried the method on any scale. Insofar as it has been tried, it has shown promising results.' "[86]

It must not be forgotton that the votary of Ahimsa has to bring to bear upon his quest the same qualities of faith, perseverance and single-mindedness, industry, resourcefulness and intelligence, as the dictator does to achieve power, if he hopes to be able to meet the challenge of brute force by the power of non-violence. "We have to live and move and have our being in Ahimsa, even as Hitler does in *himsa*. . . . Hitler is awake all the 24 hours of the day in perfecting his *sadhana*. He wins because he pays the price."[87]

Are the votaries of Ahimsa prepared similarly to pay the price? asks Gandhiji. Are their intellects unclouded and unerring? "A mere belief in Ahimsa . . . will not do. It should be intelligent and creative. If intellect plays a large part in the field of violence, I hold that it plays a larger part in the field of non-violence."[88]

7

A close study of natural and historical phenomena shows that when a particular tendency in nature, or society has reached its peak, it is, by a sudden mutational change, transformed into its opposite. For a while the two balance each other. The resultant then becomes the starting point of a new phase of development. "The road of Excess leads to the Palace of Wisdom," wrote William Blake. Often things get worse before they become better. The increasing deadliness and use of destructive weapons far from being necessarily a pointer to the future may indeed be its reverse.

It is a curious phenomenon that during the second World War, though armaments had become deadlier, the actual casualties were less than during the first. The totalitarian powers found that if they could demonstrate their undoubted capacity to exterminate the opponent, it was not necessary for their purpose to exterminate him. Round this discovery they built their philosophy of frightfulness which enabled them by diplomatic pressure alone sometimes to enslave whole populations without firing a shot. But no sooner was this discovery put into effect than its opposite came into the field. The oppressed people discovered that if they were prepared to die to the last man, in all probability they would not have to die. For what the tyrant desires is not total annihilation of the opponent but to bend him to his will. The moment, therefore, the people realise that there is something in them which is apart from the body and which armaments cannot destroy along with the perishable body, the power of armaments is sterilised. That is what happened in the end. By learning the art of dying without a sense of defeat, the oppressed people managed to live, while the oppressors rushed headlong to their doom. As the author of *The Moon is Down* put it, "The flies overcame the fly-paper."

Proceeding on this analogy, Gandhiji predicted that the advent of the atom bomb, which is the ultimate of brute force, would inevitably bring into the field its opposite, viz. soul-force or the power of the spirit. The day mankind learnt to pit it against the tyranny of brute force, the citadel of tyranny would fall and the atomic nightmare that today weighs upon humanity would roll away and vanish like the memory of an ugly dream: "Non-violence is . . . soul force or the power of godhead within us. Imperfect man cannot grasp the whole of that Essence . . . but even an infinitesimal fraction of it, when it becomes active within us can work wonders. . . . Non-violence is like radium in its action. An infinitesimal quantity of it imbeded in a malignant growth, acts continuously, silently, and ceaselessly till it has transformed the whole mass of the diseased tissue into

a healthy one. . . . It is self-acting. The soul persists even after death, its existence does not depend on the physical body. . . . It transcends time and space. It follows, therefore, that if non-violence becomes successfully established in one place, its influence will spread everywhere."[89]

Gandhiji postulated only two conditions for its success: (1) There must be recognition of the existence of the soul apart from the body, and its permament nature, and "this recognition must amount to a living faith"; and (2) in the last resort "this technique does not avail those who do not possess a living faith in the God of Love."

It has again been argued that in these days of aerial warfare, the person who rains death from above does not even know who and how many have been killed. How can the method of moral conversion be used to affect him, seeing that there is no personal contact?

Gandhiji's reply to this is included in the foregoing. Non-violence is an all-pervasive force. It does not depend for its propagation upon a physical medium. It is self--sustained and self-acting. Besides, "a warrior lives upon his wars." The moment he finds that his armaments and warring talent are out of court, he is paralysed. Says Gandhiji: "Supposing a people make up their mind that they will never do the tyrant's will, nor retaliate with the tyrant's own methods, the tyrant will not find it worth his while to go on with his terrorism. If sufficient food is given to the tyrant, a time will come when he will have more than his surfeit. If all the mice in the world held conference together and resolved that they would no more fear the cat but all run into her mouth, the mice would live."[90] The cat plays with a mouse. She does not kill it outright but holds it between her jaws, then releases it, and again pounces upon it as soon as it has made an effort to escape. In the end, the mouse dies out of sheer fright. "The cat would have derived no sport if the mouse had not tried to run away."[91]

Has the emergence of atomic weapons made obsolete the weapon of non-violence? Gandhiji was once asked. Far from this being the case, he replied, non-violence was the only thing that was left in the field after that. "It is the only thing that the atom bomb cannot destroy." "I did not move a muscle," he went on to add, "when I first heard that an atom bomb had wiped out Hiroshima. On the contrary I said to myself, 'Unless now the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind'."

"How would you meet the atom bomb . . . with non-violence?" Margaret Bourke-White, the American correspondent asked Gandhiji on the 30th January, 1948, just a few hours before he was killed. He replied: "I will not go underground. I will not go into shelter. I will come out in the open and let the pilot see I have not a trace of ill-will against him. The pilot will not see our faces from his great height,

I know. But the longing in our hearts—that he will not come to harm—would reach up to him and his eyes would be opened."

Then guessing probably what was passing in his interviewer's mind, he added: "If those thousands who were done to death in Hiroshima, if they had died with that prayerful action—died openly with that prayer in their hearts—their sacrifice would not have gone in vain."

This was no mere statement of personal faith or a mystical belief. He had again and again shown how an awakened soul armed with the power of non-violence could achieve what whole battalions of armed forces could not.

Nobody is expected to accept the solitary experience of another as decisive scientific proof. But Gandhiji maintained that his experience was capable of being repeated by anyone if all the conditions were fulfilled. The practice of Ahimsa, therefore, had a scientific basis. "The *rishis*, who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence, were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realised their uselessness and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence."[92]

Gandhiji's programme of Satyagraha, observes Dr. Zimmer, "is a serious, very brave, and potentially vastly powerful modern experiment in the ancient Hindu science of transcending the sphere of lower powers by entering that of higher. . . . This is a battle waged on the colossal, modern scale, and according to principles derived from the textbooks, not of the Royal Military College, but of Brahman."[93]

This statement needs to be slightly modified. The science of Brahman is by no means peculiarly or exclusively a "Hindu" science. "There is only one *sat*—Ultimate Reality—the learned name it variously," testified the ancient Vedic seer. Every religion has produced men of faith and realisation in all climes and ages who have attested to and demonstrated the matchless efficacy of the power of the spirit. Only in India an attempt was made to discover and formulate its science.

Gandhiji's contribution consisted in forging out of it a sanction for society for the solution of world problems "or rather the one supreme problem of war"[94] and bringing to bear on the investigation of its techniques patient experimental accuracy and the critical detachment of a modern scientist.

The present era will be associated by the future historian with two world-shaking events, viz. the discovery and release of atomic energy and the demonstration of the power of the *atman* to resist the power of armaments successfully. If one may use an analogy, Thoreau was to the science of *atman* its Bohr and Fermi, who first achieved atomic fission and the release of the energy locked up in the atom. Tolstoy may be compared to Einstein, who working through pure mathematics,

discovered all by himself, and enunciated the existence of energy imprisoned in the atom, its potentialities and the possibility of its release. Gandhiji's role is analogus to that of the scientists who perfected techniques, for achieving controlled atomic chain reactions and harnessing the same to peaceful ends.

In a moment of rare illumination, Thoreau wrote: "Love. . . never ceases, it never slacks. Its power is incalculable; it can move the globe without a resting place. But though the wisest men in all ages have laboured to publish this force and every human heart is, sooner or later, more or less, made to feel it, yet how little is it actually applied to social needs. . . . True it (love) is the motive-power of all successful social machinery; but . . . as the mechanical forces have not yet been generously and largely applied to make the physical world answer to the ideal, so the power of love has been but meanly and sparingly applied, as yet. . . . Still less are we accumulating its power, and preparing to act with greater energy at a future time. Shall we not contribute our share to this enterprise then?"[95]

A couple of months before his death, Tolstoy in a letter to Gandhiji predicted that the non-violent work that he, Gandhiji, was engaged in in South Africa was the one in which the whole of the Christian and non-Christian world was bound one day to participate.

With a certitude characteristic of him Gandhiji affirmed: "We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence."[96]

The weapon of non-violent resistance or soul force which Gandhiji has given to the world is thus the fruit and culmination of the researches of savants from all over the world. It is the common heritage of all the down-trodden and oppressed peoples of the earth in the battle of right against wrong, of freedom and justice against tyranny, of the spirit against the power of armaments, and if one might say so, their only hope.

We hear so much these days of international control and development of atomic energy. Cannot there be international cooperation for the development and use of this unique power about which Jung, that greatest of living psychologists, has testified: "Psychic life is a world power that exceeds by many times all the powers of the earth."[97]

APPENDICES : NOTES : GLOSSARY : INDEX

APPENDIX A

ARMED INVASION AND NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

1

CAN INDIA BE DEFENDED?

The following appeared in the American magazine Liberty *of August, 1940, under the caption "Can India be Defended" by Mahatma Gandhi. It was splashed as "New weapon against the invader. A famous leader presents an amazing plan. (Reading time 6 minutes 5 seconds)." Whether it was actually written by Gandhiji in that form is more than can be vouched for.* Harijan *was not coming out at that time. And I was behind the prison bars as a "no-war" civil resister. But the ideas so vividly set forth in it are authentic enough as will be seen from Gandhiji's replies to Mirabehn's questions two years later* (see page 815).

In recent months the German armies have swallowed vast new stretches of territory with a lightning speed. France has fallen and has been ruthlessly divided by the terms of the armistice. For the first time in more than a hundred years, England faces an enemy across the narrow waters of the Channel, and faces that enemy alone. The morrow, perhaps, will bring invasion by water and by air, and the very heart of the vast Empire may go down in bloody defeat.

But of course it is impossible to foretell the events of tomorrow, just as it was impossible to foretell the events of the past several months. One thing is clear: that new situations and urgent new problems are arising for all lands that in the past have been bound to Britain. These problems will weigh more heavily on India, perhaps, than on any other country. India, therefore, must consider most seriously indeed the possibilities contained in the immediate future.

There are three at least that stand out. One is that England will win. The next is that England and Germany will fight each other to a standstill, and that a peace of sheer exhaustion will be signed, leaving the Empire completely or virtually untouched. And the third possibility is that England will be defeated, and that her conquerors will set to work to break up the Empire.

As the richest and, in terms of profitable exploitation, most desirable part of the British Empire, India must give consideration to this third possibility.

Would India defend herself against the conqueror? And — more pertinently, perhaps — could India defend herself?

But first let me say this. The theoretical point has been raised that a third nation might help India to win her independence from Great Britain — say Germany or Russia. Would India accept that help?

No. We must find ourselves through our own inner strength; otherwise we must fall. Any structure built with outside help must of necessity be weak. India must win her future alone, and stand alone.

That has a direct bearing on the questions I have raised about India's inclination and ability to defend herself. For these questions are not of necessity related only to the outcome of the present war. The questions would apply just as much, if, say, there had been no war and if England had granted India full and complete independence. For India might then be just as liable to aggression as if she were seized as a part of a defeated British Empire.

I can best answer the question of India's ability to defend herself by referring to a letter I received recently from America. My correspondent asks: "Suppose a free India adopts Satyagraha (civil disobedience) and non-violence as an instrument of national policy, how would she defend herself against probable aggression by another State? What kind of resistance could and would be offered the invader? What would India's actions be to meet the invading army at the frontier? Or would she withhold all action until after the invader had taken over the whole country?"

My answers, obviously, can be only speculative. There is a very big "if" involved — that India would adopt civil disobedience and non-violence as her national policy. But let us suppose that such is the case. Let us suppose that there is no Indian army, no defensive fortifications, no rifles, cannons, shells, airplanes, tanks. And let us suppose that India stands entirely by herself and that the vast and powerful armies of a modern edition of Nero descend upon her. What would happen?

India would defend herself in this way.

The representatives of the free Indian State would let the invader in without opposition. But they would tell the invader and all his forces at the frontier that the Indian people would refuse to cooperate in any work in any undertaking. They would refuse to obey orders despite all threats and despite all punishments inflicted upon them.

That is civil disobedience. That is India's defence.

You may fancy that the hardened and ruthless invader would laugh at such measures. If he had conquered armies who opposed him with steel and cannons and warplanes, surely it would be ridiculously easy for him to conquer this unarmed army! But India is a land of millions, and if they stand idle the whole country stands idle. Nothing can be done with it; it is worthless. Civil disobedience, the invader would soon find, is a very powerful weapon indeed.

And there is another measure of defence that India could adopt. Trained in the art of non-violent resistance, the Indian people would offer themselves unarmed as fodder for the aggressor's cannons. They would tell the invader that they preferred death to submission. These brave words have been spoken in other lands; in India they would be spoken with all their true meaning, and spoken in the one great overwhelming voice of the masses. By the million, India's people would offer their breasts to the invader's bullets. And this

would be a terrifying spectacle — and one of the highest moral stature, ennobling those who took part in it.

The underlying belief in this philosophy of defence is that even a modern Nero is not devoid of a heart. The spectacle — never seen before by him or his soldiers — of endless rows of men and women simply dying, without violent protest, must ultimately affect him. If it does not affect Nero himself, it will affect his soldiery. Men can slaughter one another for years in the heat of battle, for them it seems to be a case of kill or be killed. But if there is no danger of being killed yourself by those you slay, you cannot go on killing defenceless and unprotesting people endlessly. You must put down your gun in self-disgust.

Thus in the end the invader must be beaten — by new weapons, peaceful weapons, the weapons of civil disobedience and non-violent resistance.

Practically speaking, there would be probably no greater loss in life than if forcible resistance were offered to the invader. How many men have been killed in Holland, Belgium, and France? Hundreds of thousands? Would the invading armies have shot down hundreds of thousands of men in cold blood if they had simply stood passively before them? I do not think so.

I have drawn no impossible picture. History is replete with instances of individual non-violent resistance of the type I have mentioned. The history of the Christian religion abounds in examples of men and women who have laid down their lives without murmur and without forcible resistance as martyrs for their faith. The histories of all religions offer similar examples.

There is no warrant for saying or thinking that a group of men and women cannot act as one in offering non-violent resistance. Indeed, the sum total of the experience of mankind is that men somehow or other live on. From which fact I infer that it is the law of love that basically rules mankind. For if hatred were the basic law, would not the human race have perished to the last man ages ago?

Yes — if India adopts the path of non-violence, she can defend herself, and she can win!

2

MIRABEHN'S LETTER TO GANDHIJI AND GANDHIJI'S REPLY

Mirabehn to Gandhiji

We may take it that the Japanese will land somewhere along the Orissa coast. Probably there will be no bombing or firing at the time of landing, as there are no defence measures on the coast. From the coast they will advance rapidly across the flat dry rice fields, where the only obstructions are rivers and ditches, now mostly dry and nowhere unfordable. As far as we are able to make out there will be no serious attempt to hold the Japanese advance until the hilly and wooded regions of the Orissa States are reached. The army of defence, whatever it is, is reported to be hidden in the jungle of these parts. It is likely to make a desperate attempt to defend the Jamshedpur road, but the chances of its being successful must be

very small. That means we may expect a battle to be fought in the north west of Orissa, after which the Japanese army will pass on into Bihar. At that time the Japanese are not likely to be broadly distributed over the country, but concentrated on their lines of communication between the sea and their advancing army. The British administration will have previously disappeared from the scene.

The problem before us is, in the event of these things happening, how are we to act?

The Japanese armies will rush over the fields and through the villages, not as avowed enemies of the population, but as chasers and destroyers of the British and American war effort. The population in its turn, is vague in its feelings. The strongest feeling is fear and distrust of the British, which is growing day by day on account of the treatment they are receiving. Anything that is not British is therefore something welcome. Here is a funny example. The villagers in some parts say — "Oh, the aeroplanes that make a great noise are British, but there are silent planes also, and they are Mahatma's planes." I think the only thing possible for these simple innocent people to learn is the attitude of neutrality, for it is, in reality, the only position that can be made logical to them. The British not only leave them to their fate without even instructing them in self-protection from bombing etc. but they issue such orders as will, if obeyed, kill them before the day of battle comes. How then can they be ready enthusiastically to obstruct the Japanese who are chasing this detested Raj, especially when the Japanese are saying, "It is not you we have come to fight." But I have found the villagers ready to take up the position of neutrality. That is to say, they would leave the Japanese to pass over their fields and villages, and try as far as possible not to come in contact with them. They would hide their food-stuffs and money, and decline to serve the Japanese. But even that much resistance would be difficult to obtain in some parts, the dislike of the British Raj being so great, that anything anti-British will be welcomed with open arms. I feel we have got to try and gauge the maximum resistance which the average inhabitants may be expected to put up, and maintain and make that our definite stand. A steady, long sustained stand, though not cent per cent. resistance, will be more effective in the long run than a stiff stand, which quickly breaks.

This maximum sustainable stand which we may expect from the average people is probably:

1 To resist firmly, and mostly non-violently, the commandeering by the Japanese of any land, houses, or movable property.

2 To render no forced labour to the Japanese.

3 Not to take up any sort of administrative service under the Japanese. (This may be hard to control in connection with some types of city people, Government opportunists and Indians brought in from other parts.)

4 To buy nothing from the Japanese.

5 To refuse their currency and any effort on their part at setting up a Raj. (Lack of workers and lack of time make it very hard, but we have to strive to stem the tide.)

Now as to certain difficulties and questions which arise:

1 The Japanese may offer to pay for labour, food and materials in British currency notes. Should the people refuse to sell for good prices or work for a good wage? For long sustained resistance over many months it may be difficult to prevent this. So long as they refuse to buy or take "service", the exploitation danger is kept off.

2 What should be done about the rebuilding of bridges, canals etc. which the British will have blown up? We shall also need the bridges and canals. Should we therefore set our hands to their rebuilding, even if it means working side by side with the Japanese, or should we retire on the approach of Japanese bridge builders?

3 If Indian soldiers, who were taken prisoners in Singapore and Burma, land with the Japanese invading army, what should be our attitude towards them? Should we treat them with the same aloofness as we are to show the Japanese or should we not try to win them over to our way of thinking?

4 After the exodus (before the approaching Japanese) of the British Raj, what shall we do about currency?

5 After battles have been fought and the Japanese armies will have advanced, the battle-field will be left strewn with the dead and wounded. I think we must unhesitatingly work side by side with the Japanese in burning and burying the dead and picking up and serving the wounded. The Japanese are likely to attend to the lightly wounded of their own men and take prisoners the lightly wounded of their enemy, but the rest would probably be left, and it will be our sacred duty to attend to them. For this we are from now planning the training of volunteers under the guidance of local doctors. Their services can also be used in case of internal disturbances, epidemics etc.

6 Besides the dead and wounded on the battle-field, a certain amount of rifles, revolvers and other small arms are likely to be left lying about unpicked up by the Japanese. If we do not make a point of collecting these things they are likely to fall into the hands of robbers, thieves, and other bad characters, who always come down like hawks to loot a battle-field. In an unarmed country like India this would lead to much trouble. In the event of our collecting such arms and ammunition, what should we do with them? My instinct is to take them out to sea and drop them in the ocean. Please tell us what you advise.

Gandhiji to Mirabehn

I have your very complete and illuminating letter....I...come straight to your questions which are all good and relevant.

1 I think we must tell the people what they should do. They will act according to their capacity. If we begin to judge their capacity and give directions accordingly our directions will be halting and even compromising which we should never do. You will therefore read my instructions in that light. Remember that our attitude is that of complete non-cooperation with the Japanese army, therefore we may not help them in any way, nor may we profit by any dealings with them. Therefore we cannot sell anything to them. If the people are not able to face the Japanese army, they will do as armed soldiers

do, i.e. retire when they are overwhelmed. And if they do so, the question of having any dealings with Japanese does not and should not arise. If, however, the people have not the courage to resist the Japanese unto death and the courage and capacity to evacuate the portion invaded by the Japanese, they will do the best they can in the light of instructions. One thing they should never do — to yield willing submission to the Japanese. That will be a cowardly act, and unworthy of a freedom-loving people. They must not escape from one fire only to fall into another and probably more terrible. Their attitude therefore must always be of resistance to the Japanese. No question, therefore, arises of accepting British currency notes or Japanese coins. They will handle nothing from Japanese hands. So far as dealings with our own people are concerned they will either resort to barter or make use of such British currency as they have, in the hope that the National Government that may take the place of British Government will take up from the people all the British currency in accordance with its capacity.

2 Question about cooperation in bridge building is covered by the above. There can be no question of this cooperation.

3 If Indian soldiers come in contact with our people, we must fraternise with them if they are well-disposed, and invite them, if they can, to join the nation. Probably they have been brought under promise that they will deliver the country from foreign yoke. There will be no foreign yoke and they will be expected to befriend people and obey National Government that might have been set up in place of British Government. If the British have retired in an orderly manner, leaving things in Indian hands, the whole thing can work splendidly and it might even be made difficult for the Japanese to settle down in India or any part of it in peace, because they will have to deal with a population which will be sullen and resistant. It is difficult to say what can happen. It is enough if people are trained to cultivate the power of resistance, no matter which power is operating — the Japanese or the British.

4 Covered by (1) above.

5 The occasion may not come, but if it does, cooperation will be permissible and even necessary.

6 Your answer about the arms found on the wayside is most tempting and perfectly logical. It may be followed but I would not rule out the idea of worthy people finding them and storing them in a safe place if they can. If it is impossible to store them and keep them from mischievous people yours is an ideal plan.

APPENDIX B

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

Though split into two, India having attained political Independence through means devised by the Indian National Congress, the Congress in its present shape and form, i.e. as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine, has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns. The struggle for the ascendency of civil over military power is bound to take place in India's progress towards its democratic goal. It must be kept out of unhealthy competition with political parties and communal bodies. For these and other similar reasons, the A.I.C.C. resolves to disband the existing Congress organisation and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh under the following rules with power to alter them as occasion may demand.

Every Panchayat of five adult men or women being villagers or village-minded shall form a unit.

Two such contiguous Panchayats shall form a working party under a leader elected from among themselves.

When there are one hundred such Panchayats, the fifty first grade leaders shall elect from among themselves a second grade leader and so on, the first grade leaders meanwhile working under the second grade leader. Parallel groups of two hundred Panchayats shall continue to be formed till they cover the whole of India, each succeeding group of Panchayats electing second grade leader after the manner of the first. All second grade leaders shall serve jointly for the whole of India and severally for their respective areas. The second grade leaders may elect, whenever they deem necessary, from among themselves a chief who will, during pleasure, regulate and command all the groups.

(As the final formation of Provinces or districts is still in a state of flux, no attempt has been made to divide this group of servants into Provincial or District Councils and jurisdiction over the whole of India has been vested in the group or groups that may have been formed at any given time. It should be noted that this body of servants derive their authority or power from service ungrudgingly and wisely done to their master, the whole of India.)

1 Every worker shall be a habitual wearer of Khadi made from self-spun yarn or certified by the A.I.S.A. and must be a teetotaller. If a Hindu he must have abjured untouchability in any shape or form in his own person or in his family and must be a believer in the ideal of inter-communal unity, equal respect and regard for all religions and equality of opportunity and status for all irrespective of race, creed or sex.

2 He shall come in personal contact with every villager within his jurisdiction.

3 He shall enrol and train workers from amongst the villagers and keep a register of all these.

4 He shall keep a record of his work from day to day.

5 He shall organise the villages so as to make them self-contained and self-supporting through their agriculture and handicrafts.

6 He shall educate the village folk in sanitation and hygiene and take all measures for prevention of ill health and disease among them.

7 He shall organise the education of the village folk from birth to death along the lines of Nai Talim, in accordance with the policy laid down by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

8 He shall see that those whose names are missing on the statutory voters' roll are duly entered therein.

9 He shall encourage those who have not yet acquired the legal qualification, to acquire it for getting the right of franchise.

10 For the above purposes and others to be added from time to time, he shall train and fit himself in accordance with the rules laid down by the Sangh for the due performance of duty.

The Sangh shall affiliate the following autonomous bodies :

1 All-India Spinners' Association.

2 All-India Village Industries Association.

3 Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

4 Harijan Sevak Sangh.

5 Go-seva Sangh.

FINANCE

The Sangh shall raise finances for the fulfilment of its mission from among the villagers and others, special stress being laid on collection of poor man's pice.

New Delhi, 29-1-'48 M. K. Gandhi

NOTES

CHAPTER I

1 Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji, February 10, 1947.

2 Pandit Nehru's Press statement, February 22, 1947.

3 Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji, February 24, 1947.

4 *The Indian Annual Register*, 1947, Vol. I, p. 100.

5 Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji, February 24, 1947.

6 Congress Working Committee's resolution, March 8, 1947; *Congress Bulletin*, March 26, 1947, p. 3.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid*, p. 4.

9 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 65.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Brailsford, *Subject India*, Bombay, 1946, p. 195.

12 Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji, February 24, 1947.

13 *The Indian Annual Register*, 1946, Vol. II, p. 86.

14 Khosla, *Stern Reckoning*, Madras, 1951, p. 95.

15 *Ibid*, pp. 95-96.

16 The following were the terms of compromise between the Punjab Government and the Muslim League: (1) The ban on public meetings to be removed, (2) Government to bring forward such legislation as may be considered necessary to preserve peace and public order in place of the present Punjab Safety Ordinance, (3) the release of all prisoners detained, under-trial or convicted in connection with the movement other than those accused or convicted of offences under Section 325 or of more serious offences under the Indian Penal Code; and (4) the ban on processions to continue.

17 *The Indian Annual Register*, 1947, Vol. I, p. 112(i).

18 Pandit Nehru's Press statement, March 17, 1947.

19 Congress Working Committee's resolution, March 8, 1947; *Congress Bulletin*, March 26, 1947, p. 5.

20 Badshah Khan in *Pakhtoon*, the official organ of the Red Shirts; quoted in *The Times of India*, July 29, 1946.

21 *The Indian Annual Register*, 1947, Vol. I, p. 112(j).

22 For relations between the Governor and the Ministry in the Frontier Province, see Chapter XII.

23 Sardar Patel to Gandhiji, January 17, 1947.

24 Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji, January 30, 1947.

25 Sardar Patel to Sir Stafford Cripps, December 15, 1946.

CHAPTER II

1 *Harijan*, April 12, 1942, p. 116.

2 Gandhiji's statement, September 17, 1934; *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, 1935, pp. 976-77.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Harijan*, July 17, 1937, p. 181.

7 *Harijan*, August 21, 1937, p. 220. Gandhiji developed the ideal further as follows: "The Ministers who may find violence, hatred or obscenity spreading in their Provinces will look to the Congress organisation and ultimately the Working Committee for active and efficient help before they resort to the processes of the criminal law and all it means. Indeed the triumph of the Congress will be measured by the success it achieves in rendering the police and the military practically idle. And it will fail utterly if it has to face crises that render the use of the police and the military inevitable. The best and the only effective way to wreck the existing constitution is for the Congress to prove conclusively that it can rule without the aid of the military and with the least possible assistance of the police."

8 *Harijan*, November 20, 1937, p. 340.

9 *Harijan*, March 20, 1938, p. 54.

10 *Harijan*, April 2, 1938, p. 64.

11 *Ibid*, p. 65.

12 *Harijan*, April 23, 1938, p. 88.

13 *Harijan*, April 9, 1938, p. 73.

14 *Harijan*, October 8, 1938, p. 282.

15 *Harijan*, October 15, 1938, p. 292.

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Harijan*, July 13, 1940, p. 199.

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Harijan*, January 25, 1942, p. 9.

21 *Ibid*, p. 10.

22 *Ibid*, p. 9.

23 *Harijan*, September 1, 1940, p. 265.

24 *Harijan*, October 13, 1946, p. 345.

25 *Harijan*, August 25, 1946, p. 278.

26 *Harijan*, October 20, 1946, p. 365.

27 *Harijan*, October 27, 1946, p. 372.

28 Gandhiji quoted in Mirabehn, *Gleanings*, Ahmedabad, 1949, p. 17.

29 *Harijan*, August 25, 1946, p. 281.

30 *Harijan*, July 28, 1946, p. 236.

31 *Harijan*, October 6, 1946, p. 342.

32 "The Government should notify the villagers that they will be expected to manufacture Khaddar for the needs of their villages within a fixed date after which no cloth will be supplied to them. The Government in their turn will supply the villagers with cotton seed or cotton wherever required, at cost price and the tools of manufacture also at cost, to be recovered in easy instalments payable in, say, five years or more. They will supply them with instructors wherever necessary and undertake to buy surplus stock of Khaddar, provided that the villagers in question have their cloth requirements supplied from their own manufacture. This should do away with cloth shortage without fuss and with very little overhead charges." — Gandhiji in *Harijan*, April 28, 1946, p. 104.

33 Gandhiji to Sardar Patel, February 5, 1947.

34 *Harijan*, July 28, 1946, p. 236.

35 Pandit Nehru to Shaheed Suhrawardy, January 1, 1947.

36 Gandhiji to Sardar Patel, January 17, 1947.

37 Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji, January 30, 1947.

38 Gandhiji to Sardar Patel, February 5, 1947.

39 Sardar Patel to Gandhiji, February 10, 1947.

40 Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji, January 30, 1947.

41 Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji, February 10, 1947.

42 Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji, January 30, 1947.

43 Here is a sample: "I have not hesitated to express my opinion that the salaries that the Congress Ministers have voted for themselves are much too high for the standard that should govern us in this the poorest country in the world....India's average annual per capita income will be found to be £ 4 against £ 50 of Great Britain. Unfortunately for us we have to bear yet a while the burden of the British inheritance, and in spite of the best effort we fail to achieve the ideal standard. The salaries and the allowances are now a settled fact. The question now is, will the Ministers, their Secretaries and the Members work so hard as to deserve the emoluments they will receive ? Will the Members become whole-time workers for the nation and give a faithful account of the services they may render? Let us not make the mistake of imagining that the things are what we wish them to be or what they should be....It is not enough that the Ministers live simply and work hard. They have to see to it that the departments they control also respond.... Justice should become cheap and expeditious. Today it is the luxury of the rich and the joy of the gambler. The police should be friends of the people instead of being their dread. Education should be so revolutionised as to answer the wants of the poorest villager instead of answering those of an imperial exploiter." — *Harijan*, August 21, 1937, p. 220.

44 Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru, March 20, 1947.

CHAPTER III

1 For instance, it was announced that agricultural loans of Rs. 350 at 6¼ per cent. interest would be given "jointly between 8 sharers" to Hindus "who had suffered to that extent". This worked out to Rs. 43-12-0 per individual and for this he would have to stand surity for Rs 350. Again, the Bengal Government had sanctioned for the whole of Noakhali district rupees two lakhs for the reconstruction of devastated houses. The share of Raipur police station, where according to a Government report, arson had been committed on 80 to 90 per cent. of the Hindu houses (see Vol. I, page 308), came to Rs. 20,000 only. This, at the rate of Rs. 250 relief grant for every house destroyed, covered 80 affected families only.

2 Gandhiji to Shaheed Suhrawardy, March 1, 1947.

3 Gandhiji to Shaheed Suhrawardy, March 20, 1947.

4 Shaheed Suhrawardy to Gandhiji, March 22, 1947.

5 Gandhiji to Shaheed Suhrawardy, March 22, 1947.

6 Gandhiji to Satish Chandra Das Gupta, April 6, 1947.

7 Shaheed Suhrawardy to Gandhiji, April 9, 1947.

8 Shaheed Suhrawardy to Gandhiji, April 26, 1947.

9 Shaheed Suhrawardy to Satish Chandra Das Gupta, April 27, 1947.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Superintendent of Police, Noakhali, to Satish Chandra Das Gupta, July 28, 1947.

12 B. Bagchi to Pyarelal, April 1, 1947.

13 A co-worker who recently returned from Noakhali described to me how Kalu Mian died some time back and how till the last he kept recounting to his friends and relatives how the Mahatma's blessings had restored to him his sight.

CHAPTER IV

1 *The Reader's Digest*, March, 1948.

2 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 31.

3 Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten, March 26, 1947.

4 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 129.

5 *Ibid*, p. 55

6 *Ibid.*

7 Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru, June 7, 1947.

8 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 57.

9 Sardar Patel to Kanji Dwarkadas, March 4, 1947.

10 *Dawn*, April 18, 1947.

11 *Dawn*, April 22, 1947.

CHAPTER V

1 Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji, February 24, 1947.

2 Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru, February 6, 1947.

3 The statement of the Muslim League Party in the Central Assembly, March 19, 1947; *The Indian Annual Register*, 1947, Vol. I, p. 298.

CHAPTER VI

1 Macaulay's minutes on education.

2 *Harijan*, March 23, 1947, p. 76.

3 Manu Gandhi, *Biharni Komi Aagma*, Ahmedabad, 1956, p. 226.

4 See also page 642.

5 Manu Gandhi, *Biharni Komi Aagma*, Ahmedabad, 1956, p. 255.

6 *Young India*, October 6, 1921, p. 318.

7 *Young India*, June 8, 1921, p. 182.

8 *Young India*, October 6, 1921, p. 318.

9 American magazine *New Outlook*, January 1950, p. 2.

10 *Ibid*, p. 4.

11 *Ibid*, pp. 3-4.

12 *Young India*, October 6, 1921, p. 318.

13 *Young India*, June 8, 1921, p. 182.

14 *Young India*, November 11, 1926, p. 391.

15 American magazine *New Outlook*, January 1950, p. 5.

16 *Young India*, November 11, 1926, p. 391.

17 *Ibid*.

18 *Young India*, October 6, 1921, p. 318.

19 *Young India*, January 29, 1925, p. 39.

20 *Young India*, July 7, 1927, p. 218.

21 *Young India*, July 28, 1921, p. 236.

22 *Young India*, October 6, 1921, p. 318.

23 *Young India*, May 29, 1924, p. 181.

24 *Young India*, November 11, 1926, p. 391.

25 *Ibid*.

26 Prayer speech, April 25, 1947.

CHAPTER VII

1 Sardar Patel's Press statement, May 9, 1947.

2 Prayer speech, May 1, 1947.

3 Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten, April 7, 1947.

4 *Ibid*.

5 Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji, April 7, 1947.

6 Pandit Nehru to Lord Mountbatten, May 1, 1947.

7 *The Hindu*, Madras, May 20, 1947.

8 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 44.

9 *Ibid*, p. 70.

10 *Ibid*, p. 81.

11 Gandhiji to Jamnadas Gandhi, June 23, 1946.

CHAPTER VIII

1 *The Hindu*, Madras, May 16, 1947.

2 *The Hindu*, Madras, May 9, 1947.

3 The amended clauses of the draft agreement between Sarat Chandra Bose and members of the Muslim League read as follows:

(1) Bengal will be a Free State. The Free State of Bengal will decide its relations with the rest of India. The question of joining any Union will be decided by the Legislature of the Free State of Bengal by a two-third majority.

(2) The constitution of the Free State of Bengal will provide for election to the Bengal Legislature on the basis of joint electorate and adult franchise with reservation of seats proportionate to the population amongst Hindus and Muslims. The seats as between Hindus and Scheduled Caste Hindus will be distributed amongst them in proportion to their respective population or in such manner as may be agreed among them. The constituencies will be multiple constituencies and the votes will be distributive and not cumulative. A candidate who gets the largest number of votes of his own community cast during the elections and at least 25 per cent. of the votes of the other communities so cast will be declared elected. If no candidate satisfies the above conditions, then that candidate who gets the next largest number of votes of his own community cast during the elections and at least 25 per cent. of the votes of the other communities so cast will be declared elected. If no candidate satisfies the conditions laid down in the previous sentence, then that candidate who gets the largest number of votes out of the total votes polled will be elected.

4 To understand fully the fears of Assam and the Congress High Command, one has to recall the amazing logic on which the Muslim League justified its demand for the inclusion of Assam in Pakistan. Inclusion of Assam in Pakistan was demanded because (a) Assam was within the "Muslim zone". One would have thought that a "Muslim zone" was that in which Muslims were in a majority. But here a Province in which Muslims were in a minority was to be included in Pakistan because it fell within an area which the Muslim League wanted to be constituted into a "Muslim zone". (b) Because

Tribal people numbering 29 lakhs were not only not Hindus (which was nonsense) but were unfit for "civilised state of life". This would reduce the "civilised section" of the population from 109 lakhs to 80 lakhs. But since 45 lakhs of Hindus would even then constitute an absolute majority, and be more numerous than the Muslims, who numbered 34.75 lakhs only, 15.2 lakhs Hindu labourers who worked in tea gardens and oil mines must further be deducted from the total on the ground that they were "non-domiciled" and migratory. Thus the 34.75 lakhs of Muslims would constitute a "majority" in a population of 109 lakhs!

The only flaw in this reasoning, as Dr. Rajendra Prasad pointed out, was that if that or similar logic were applied to other parts of India, the Hindus would be reduced to a minority in the whole of India, the whole of India would become Pakistan and then there would be no case left for the creation of separate north-western or north-eastern Muslim zone at all!

To these was added another ground by Jinnah, viz., that there was "no other way of fitting Assam anywhere except in Pakistan. For this the districts of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling with overwhelming Hindu population (77 per cent. and 96 per cent. respectively) must in the first instance be included in Pakistan because they happened to be part of a Province which was claimed for Pakistan. Assam should then follow suit because as a result of the loss of these two districts it would then be cut off from the Indian Union. It was heads I win, tails you lose so far as Assam was concerned.

5 Shaheed Suhrawardy to Gandhiji, June 10, 1947.

6 Gandhiji to Shaheed Suhrawardy, June 12, 1947.

7 *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, May 28, 1947.

CHAPTER IX

1 Sardar Patel's Press statement, May 26, 1947.

2 Acharya Kripalani's Press interview, May 28, 1947.

CHAPTER X

1 Prayer speech, June 3, 1947.

2 Casey, *An Australian in India*, London, 1947.

3 In fact Gandhiji went so far as to point out that in certain circumstances it may be a "sin" for a meat-eater to give up meat: "In life it is impossible to eschew violence completely. The question arises, where is one to draw the line? The line cannot be the same for every-one. Although essentially the principle is the same.... Meat-eating is a sin for me. Yet for another person who has always lived on meat and never seen anything wrong in it, to give it up simply in order to copy me will be a sin." — *Harijan*, June 9, 1946, p. 172.

CHAPTER XII

1 For the history of trans-border raids and their relation to the pushing of military roads into the tribal territory, and how these were used by the Imperialist top-brass to justify the ruinous military expenditure which the Indian budget could ill bear, see author's *A Pilgrimage for Peace*, Ahmedabad, 1950, pp. 24-27.

2 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 79.

3 Badshah Khan's speech at Charsadda, April 28, 1947; *Leader*, Allahabad, April 30, 1947.

4 For a full description of this policy, the reader is referred to author's *A Pilgrimage for Peace*, Ahmedabad, 1950, pp. 18-27.

5 Prayer speech, June 20, 1947.

6 Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten, June 10/11, 1947.

7 Pandit Nehru's note on Frontier Province, dated June 8, 1947.

8 Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru, June 9, 1947.

9 Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten, June 10, 1947.

10 Gandhiji to Badshah Khan, June 9, 1947.

11 Collin Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier.*

12 Acharya Kripalani to Lord Mountbatten, June 28, 1947.

13 Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji, June 30, 1947.

14 Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji, July 4, 1947.

15 *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, July 3, 1947.

16 Dr. Khan Saheb to Pandit Nehru, July 2, 1947.

17 Gandhiji to Badshah Khan, November 17, 1947.

18 For a detailed story of the Khan Brothers' heroic struggle after the partition and Gandhiji's death, the reader is referred to author's *A Pilgrimage for Peace*, Ahmedabad, 1950.

CHAPTER XIII

1 Prayer speech, June 11, 1947.

2 Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten, June 10, 1947.

3 Lord Ismay's note of his conversation with Gandhiji, dated June 7, 1947.

4 Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji, June 10, 1947.

5 *Harijan*, July 13, 1947, p. 235.

6 Gandhiji to Sardar Patel, June 23, 1947.

7 *Matthew* 27:24.

8 *Harijan*, July 6, 1947, p. 223.

9 *Harijan*, July 20, 1947, p. 242.

10 Prayer speech, July 6, 1947.

11 Prayer speech, July 13, 1947.

12 Gandhiji to S. K. Patil, July 12, 1947.

13 Prayer speech, July, 14, 1947.
14 *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XIV

1 Prayer speech, June 15, 1947.
2 *Ibid.*
3 Gandhiji to Sushila Pai, July 28, 1947.
4 Gandhiji to V. V. Dastane, July 13, 1947.
5 Mirabehn (ed.), *Bapu's Letters to Mira,* Ahmedabad, 1949, p. 59.
6 *Harijan,* July 13, 1940, p. 201.
7 *Harijan,* July 27, 1947, p. 253.
8 *Harijan,* July 21, 1940, p. 211.
9 *Harijan,* July 27, 1947, p. 253.
10 Reported in *Harijan,* July 27, 1947, p. 253.
11 *Harijan,* July 27, 1947, p. 253.
12 *Ibid.*
13 *Harijan,* June 8, 1947, p. 184.
14 Prayer speech, July 25, 1947.
15 Prayer speech, July 2, 1947.
16 *Harijan,* July 27, 1947, p. 245.
17 *Ibid.*
18 *Ibid.*
19 Paryer speech, June 26, 1947.
20 *Harijan,* June 29, 1947, p. 213.
21 Carl Heath to Gandhiji, July 19, 1947.
22 Gandhiji to Carl Heath, July 26, 1947.
23 Gandhiji to Kishorlal Mashruwala, July 30, 1947.
24 *Young India,* November 17, 1921, p. 377.
25 *Ibid,* p. 368.
26 Gandhiji to Kishorlal Mashruwala, July 30, 1947.
27 Prayer speech, June 16, 1947.
28 *Ibid.*
29 *Ibid.*
30 Reported in *Harijan,* June 29, 1947, p. 209.
31 Gandhiji to Ram Manohar Lohia, July 22, 1947.

CHAPTER XV

1 Gandhiji to Sardar Patel, August 6, 1947.

2 Gandhiji to Sardar Patel, August 13, 1947.

3 Allama Mashriqui's telegram to Gandhiji, November 2, 1947.

4 Sardar Patel to Gandhiji, August 11, 1947.

5 *The New Statesman and Nation*, London, June 18, 1949.

6 Prayer speech, July 19, 1947.

7 Prayer speech, July 16, 1947.

8 *Harijan*, August 3, 1947, p. 260.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid*, p. 263.

11 Prayer speech, July 24, 1947.

12 Prayer speech, July 28, 1947.

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Harijan*, August 3, 1947, p. 262.

15 *Ibid*, p. 261.

16 Prayer speech, June 13, 1947.

17 Gandhiji's speech before the A.-I.C.C., June 14, 1947.

18 Prayer speech, June 24, 1947.

19 Lord Mountbatten's Press Conference, June 4, 1947. With regard to Gandhiji's perturbation over lacunae in Lord Mountbatten's pronouncement on p. 343, see note No. 22 below.

20 Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten, June 10/11, 1947.

21 Jinnah's Press statement, June 17, 1947.

22 Lord Elgin, who succeeded Lord Canning as Viceroy (1862), wrote: "If you attempt to crush all superiorities, you unite the native population in a homogeneous mass against you. If you foster pride of rank and position, you encourage pretensions which you cannot gratify, partly because you dare not abdicate your own functions as a Paramount Power and partly because you cannot control the arrogance of your subjects of the dominant (*sic*) race. Scindia and Holkar are faithful to us in proportion as they are weak and conscious that they require our aid to support them against their own subjects and neighbours....My own opinion is that Canning never intended to let the chiefs get the bit into their mouths, or to lose his hold over them. It is true that he rode them with a loose rein, but the pace was so killing...that it took the kick out of them and a light hand and silken thread were all that was required. His policy of deference to the authority of Native Chiefs was a means to an end, the end being the establishment of the British Raj in India; and when the means and the end came into conflict, or seemed likely to do so, the former went to the wall." — *Letters and Journals* of James, Eighth Earl of Elgin (1872), quoted in Gundappa, *The States and Their People in the Indian Constitution*, Bangalore, 1931, p. 52.

Wrote Lord Minto, his successor, nearly half a century later: "I have been thinking a good deal...of a possible counterpoise to

Congress aims. I think we may find solution in the Council of Princes."

Even as late as the passing of the Government of India Act of 1935, the function of the Princes was envisaged to be "to make the Centre conservative and pro-English." (See page 218).

H. N. Brailsford, the well-known English author and publicist has the following outspoken comments to make on this question in his *Subject India*: "A glance at the map should show...that...these States interlock with the British Provinces like the pieces in a child's jig-saw puzzle. They cut across rivers, railways, telegraph wires and electric grids. In them the Imperial Power would still be able to station British troops. The princes, so long as they remained autocrats and British puppets, were in a position to serve the Empire by a formidable process of black-mail. If they came in, they would condemn the Indian Union to a long night of reaction: if they stayed out, it would lie at the mercy of their master. In either event Independence was a vain hope.

"The reader may reply that I am making too much of a detail. 'Surely,' he may object, 'this little matter of arranging for the democratic representation of the princes' subjects would have been adjusted in due course. This was obviously an oversight.' Nothing of the kind. Controversy had raged round this question since the Round Table Conference. The Grey Eminences of the India Office in their own limited field of vision have clear sight. It knows that once the princes honestly concede responsible government with civil rights, they will become useless to the Empire....The tactics of the Die-hards are obvious to any cool observer. They yield, very slowly, one point after another, until they produce an offer that looks to the ill-informed public plausible and even generous. They keep in reserve, however, a strategical key that suffices for their purpose. So long as they hold it, they command India. But why should I try to say in my own words what the leading official expert on this subject, Professor Rushbrook-Williams, had said so much better? About these princes he wrote: 'Many of them owe their very existence to British justice and arms....Their affection and loyalty are important assets for Britain in the present troubles and in the re-adjustments which must come....The situation of these feudatory States, checkerboarding all India as they do, are a great safeguard. It is establishing a vast net-work of friendly fortresses in debatable territory. It would be difficult for a general rebellion against the British to sweep India because of this network of powerful, loyal Native States.' (*Evening Standard*, May 28, 1930). What Canning saw so clearly in 1860 the India Office does not forget today. While it holds these 'friendly fortresses', India can never achieve her independence." — *Subject India*, Bombay, 1946, pp. 65-67.

23 Gandhiji to Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, August 27, 1947.

24 Pandit Nehru's wire to Maulana Azad, June 21, 1946.

25 Maharaja Hari Singh to Pandit Nehru, July 11, 1946.

26 Maharaja Hari Singh to H. S. Sharma, September 7, 1946.

27 Congress Working Committee's resolution, dated September 25, 1946.

28 Professor K. T. Shah's note of his conversation with Gandhiji, dated October 16, 1946.

29 Nawab of Bhopal to Shuaib Qureshi, October 20, 1946.

30 Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten, June 27, 1947.

31 Gandhiji's report on his Kashmir visit, dated August 6, 1947.

32 *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XVI

1 Prayer speech, July 11, 1947.

2 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 139.

3 Horace Alexander in a note to the author.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

6 During the debate on the Indian Independence Bill in the House of Lords, Earl Winterton, the Conservative peer, had made an exceptionally mischievous speech, attacking Gandhiji.

7 Gandhiji to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, August 16, 1947.

8 Prayer speech, August 20, 1947.

9 Prayer speech, August 22, 1947.

10 *Harijan*, August 24, 1947, p. 292.

11 Lord Mountbatten to Gandhiji, August 26, 1947.

12 Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten, August 30, 1947.

CHAPTER XVII

1 Gandhiji to Sardar Patel, August 17, 1947.

2 Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji, August 22, 1947.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Harijan*, September 28, 1947, p. 337.

5 Sardar Patel to Gandhiji, August 24, 1947.

6 Sardar Patel to Gandhiji, August 27, 1947.

7 Gandhiji, the reader will have noted, had been anxious to go to the Punjab ever since he came to Delhi in the last week of March 1947. He had warned Congress leaders (see Vol. I, p. 668) and Lord Mountbatten (see Vol. II, p. 158) that the Punjab situation, unless it was rightly tackled, might very well reduce to ashes independence itself. But while the Congress leaders under-rated the danger and Lord Mountbatten pinned his faith on a "combined front against violence", a section of the Congress leaders in the Punjab, it seems, would have preferred to be left alone to square it out in their own way with the Muslim League. One of them, a top-ranker, was reported to have delivered himself at a public meeting as follows in the first week of March, 1947: "I have had consultations with the Congress High Command and I can with full responsibility say that non-violence or violence, clashes or no clashes, we must see that League Ministry is not established here." (From a note to Gandhiji by a member of the A.-I.C.C. from the Punjab). No wonder in the

midst of this Babel of miscalculations and errors of judgment. Gandhiji's going to the Punjab did not find favour with any party till at a very late stage. It was too late then. Fat was in the fire.

8 Gandhiji to Pyarelal, July 17, 1947.

9 Satish Chandra Das Gupta to Shaheed Suhrawardy, July 26, 1947.

10 Satish Chandra Das Gupta to Superintendent of Police, Noakhali, July 26, 1947.

11 Superintendent of Police, Noakhali, to Satish Chandra Das Gupta, July 28, 1947.

12 Gandhiji to Pyarelal, August 3, 1947.

13 Gandhiji's Press statement, September 1, 1947.

14 *Ibid.*

15 Gandhiji to Sardar Patel, September 1, 1947.

16 Gandhiji's Press statement, September 1, 1947.

17 Gandhiji to Sardar Patel, September 1, 1947.

18 Gandhiji's Press statement, September 1, 1947.

CHAPTER XVIII

1 Prayer speech, September 22, 1947.

2 "Out of the heap of hypotheses we reject all and positively maintain that we Hindus came into this land from nowhere, but are indigenous children of the soil always, from times immemorial and are natural masters of the country." — *We or Our Nationhood Defined* by M. S. Golwalkar, p. 13.

3 *Ibid*, pp. 19-20.

4 Prayer speech, October 30, 1947.

5 Prayer speech, October 3, 1947.

6 *Harijan*, October 12, 1947, p. 368.

7 Gandhiji to Dorothy Hogg, October 22, 1947.

8 *Harijan*, November 16, 1947, p. 412.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Harijan*, November 23, 1947, p. 420.

11 Gandhiji to Miss Schelesin, November 1, 1947.

12 *Harijan*, September 28, 1947, p. 340.

13 *Harijan*, October 26, 1947, p. 381.

CHAPTER XIX

1 Prayer speech, October 27, 1947.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Prayer speech, November 5, 1947.

4 Prayer speech, October 13, 1947.

5 Prayer speech, September 28, 1947.

6 Prayer speech, October 5, 1947.

7 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 129.

8 Professor N. R. Malkani in an article entitled "My Creed in Pakistan", July 1947.

9 Professor N. R. Malkani to Gandhiji, January 4, 1948. As to the plight of Harijans in Sind referred to in the next para, see Dr. Ambedkar's Press statement dated November 27, 1947, in which he invited the members of his community who were "impounded in Pakistan" to come over to India as the only way of escape from the "forcible political conversion" to which they were being subjected there. — *Hindustan Standard*, Calcutta, November 29, 1947.

10 Prayer speech, September 29, 1947.

11 *Harijan*, October 26, 1947, p. 384.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Hindustan Standard*, Calcutta, October 8, 1947.

14 In the original story there is a wild cat in the place of the lion. The fable, which is intended to inculcate on kings and their chancellors the essentially temporary and unaltruistic nature of all political alliances, comes in the great epic, the Mahabharat, 12.138.

15 Report of Jamnadas Dwarkadas, dated October 23, 1947.

16 Jinnah's Press statement, September 12, 1947.

17 Margaret Bourke-White, *Halfway to Freedom*, New York, 1949, p. 98.

18 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 217.

19 Prayer speech, December 1, 1947.

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 Gandhiji to Samaldas Gandhi, December 3, 1947.

23 Prayer speech, December 5, 1947.

24 *Harijan*, December 21, 1947, p. 473.

25 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 120.

26 Maharaja Hari Singh to Lord Mountbatten, October 26, 1947.

27 Sheikh Abdullah's speech at Hazoribagh (Kashmir), October 3, 1947. — *Hindustan Standard*, Calcutta, October 6, 1947.

28 Pakistan Government's telegram to the Government of Kashmir, October 18, 1947.

29 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 230.

30 *Ibid*, p. 229.

31 *Ibid*.

32 Prayer speech, November 19, 1947.

33 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 259.

34 Prayer speech, November 27, 1947.

35 Prayer speech, December 29, 1947.

36 *Ibid*.

37 *Harijan*, July 20, 1948, pp. 143-44.

38 *The New Statesman and Nation*, London, April 30, 1949, p. 452.

39 Prayer speech, October 29, 1947.

40 Prayer speech, November 11, 1947.

41 *Young India*, June 1, 1921, p. 173.

42 *Ibid*.

43 *Harijan*, October 21, 1939, p. 309.

44 *Harijan*, August 18, 1940, p. 250.

45 *Harijan*, January 18, 1942, p. 4.

46 Prayer speech, November 5, 1947.

47 *Harijan*, July 20, 1935, p. 180.

48 Prayer speech, November 5, 1947.

49 Gandhiji to Manu Gandhi, June 27, 1946.

50 *Harijan*, March 9, 1940, p. 31.

51 *Ibid*.

52 *Ibid*.

53 *Harijan*, June 22, 1935, p. 148.

54 *Young India*, September 13, 1928, p. 308.

55 *Ibid*.

56 *Ibid*.

57 *Harijan*, July 19, 1942, p. 234.

58 *Ibid*.

59 *Harijan*, June 21, 1942, p. 197.

60 *Harijan*, June 9, 1946, p. 174.

61 *Harijan*, May 12, 1946, p. 128.

62 *Ibid*.

63 *Harijan*, June 9, 1946, p. 174.

64 *Harijan*, May 12, 1946, p. 128.

65 *Ibid*.

66 *Ibid*.

CHAPTER XX

1 Prayer speech, November 4, 1947, (see also note No. 3 under Chapter X).

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Harijan*, December 7, 1947, p. 452.

4 Prayer speech, November 9, 1947.

5 Prayer speech, November 12, 1947.

6 Prayer speech, October 28, 1947.

7 Gandhiji to Pyarelal, December 1, 1947.

8 *Harijan*, December 7, 1947, p. 453.

9 *Harijan*, November 16, 1947, p. 412.

10 Prayer speech, December 15, 1947.

11 *Ibid.*

12 Prayer speech, December 17, 1947.

13 Prayer speech, December 23, 1947.

14 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 241.

CHAPTER XXI

1 Gina Lombroso, *The Tragedies of Progress*, New York, 1931, p. 250

2 David Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasants*, London, 1952, p. 229.

3 George R. Sargent in *The New Statesman and Nation*, January 5, 1952.

4 *Harijan*, January 28, 1939, p. 439.

5 *Young India*, March 17, 1927, p. 86.

6 *Young India*, April 23, 1931, p. 81.

7 *Harijan*, January 28, 1939, pp. 438-39.

8 David Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasants*, London, 1952, p. 130.

9 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947. p. xiii.

10 Wilfred Wellock, *A Mechanistic or a Human Society?*, p. 14.

11 J. Kranjevic, *Peasant Movement in Eastern and Danubian Europe*, quoted in "Contemporary Review", August 1948.

12 David Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasants*, London, 1952, p. 164.

13 G T. Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, London, 1939, p. 139.

14 It is appalling the amount of forest timber that goes into the making of newsprint alone. Only one Sunday edition of a daily paper like the *New York Times*, it has been calculated, requires "ten acres of big trees" to supply the necessary wood pulp for its paper. And

newsprint is only one out of the many items of modern living that make demands on our forest wealth.

15 Dr. Mitrany quotes the following from Professor Y. U. Knornev: "The tractor plough is the enemy of grassland in dry areas, but is indispensable to the propagandist in the modernisation of Russian agriculture. Though forewarned by the experience of other countries, it is difficult to ascertain if the authorities are aware of the danger of mechanisation."

16 Jacks and Whyte, *The Rape of the Earth*, p. 37.

17 In May 1934, according to Jacks and Whyte, an estimated 300 million tons of Middle West soil were lifted by one storm and some of it "for the first time in history reached the Atlantic seaboard in sufficient quantity to darken the cities and choke their dwellers. 'It seemed as if the very desert had resolved to march on the Capital'." — *The Rape of the Earth*, p. 214.

18 *Ibid*, p. 26.

19 Edward Hyams in *The New Statesman and Nation*, December 8, 1951.

20 During the years 1920-25, over 520,000 tons of bones alone were exported from India, impoverishing the soil in respect of lime and phosphates to that extent. — Sir John Orr, quoted in Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, London, 1939, p. 81.

21 According to McCarrison and Vishwanathan, the difference in nutritive value of grains grown on soil treated with cattle manure as compared with grains grown on soil treated with chemical manure amounted in millet to about 15 per cent. and in wheat to between 10 and 17 per cent. Wheat grown on soil treated with cattle manure contained more vitamin A than wheat grown on soil treated with complete chemical manure; millet grown on soil treated with cattle manure contained more vitamin B than millet grown on soil treated with complete chemical manure. One gramme of 'cattle manure wheat', when added to the basal diet used in these experiments as the sole additional source of vitamins A and B gave better growth in rats, than when these vitamins were provided by cod-liver oil and marmite; one gramme of 'chemical manure wheat' gave as good growth. — *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, 1926, p. 351.

22 Sir Albert Howard, Director of the Institute of Plant Industry, Indore (1924-31), as a result of his experiments on animal and plant breeding came to the conclusion that "1. Insects and fungi are not the real cause of plant disease, and only attack unsuitable varieties or crops improperly grown. Their true role in agriculture is that of censors for pointing out the crops which are imperfectly nourished. Disease resistance seems to be the natural reward of healthy and well-nourished protoplasm. The first step is to make the soil live by seeing that the supply of humus is maintained. 2. The policy of protecting crops from pests by means of sprays, powders and so forth is thoroughly unscientific and radically unsound; even when successful, this procedure merely preserves material hardly worth saving."

So bold did Sir Howard become, records Dr. Wrench in his *The Wheel of Health*, "in his assurance that by right soil-feeding he had overcome the danger of disease that he offered to import 'a supply of the various cotton boll-worms and boll-weevils from America, and

the letting of these loose among my cultures. I am pretty certain that they would have found my cotton cultures very indifferent nourishment...at Indore during the seven years I was there; I cannot recall a single case of insect or fungous attack.' "

The same applied to animals which were fed on healthy plant life. "For twenty-one years (1910-1931)," Howard wrote in "The Role of Insects and Fungi in Agriculture" (*The Empire Cotton Growing Review*, Vol. xiii), "I was able to study the reaction of well-fed animals to epidemic diseases, such as rinderpest, foot-and-mouth disease, septicaemia, and so forth, which frequently devastated the countryside. None of my animals were segregated; none were inoculated; they frequently came in contact with diseased stock. No case of infectious disease occurred. The reward of well-nourished protoplasm was a very high degree of disease resistance, which might even be described as immunity."

23 Observes Lord Northbourne: "Milk must be pasteurised in order that it may be more safely bulked for handling by vast distributing concerns....It is true that...pasteurisation kills disease germs....(But) pasteurising admittedly alters one of the phosphatic constituents of milk — indeed the alteration in question is used as one of the tests of efficient pasteurisation. That constituent is closely concerned in the calcium metabolism of the body, which includes among other things the formation of bones and teeth....Purity is the advertiser's watchword. But in practice it has come to be almost synonymous with sterilisation. Sterilisation means killing, in order to remove the likelihood of unwanted change. It is the very opposite of freshness. The excellence of freshness consists in the existence of susceptibility to change....It is practically certain that nothing which is chemically pure is of any use at all. Even chemically pure water is no good to drink. The subtleties which really count are all of the nature of impurities....Hygiene is all very well, but it is no substitute for health." (*Look to the Land*, London, 1940, pp. 68-70). It is the same when wheat is ground and sifted into white flour and rice is polished.

24 Gilbert C. Wilson under "Hungry People with Full Stomachs" has the following: "We worked hard. We diligently kept our fields clean. We even raked and burned our cotton and cornstalks so that they would not handicap the subsequent crop. The grass in our pasture was nice and tall and green, but the Devil seemed to be winning. Our cattle seemed to starve to death on a full stomach. They didn't actually lie down and die, but it seemed that as they would eat more and more, their bellies would get larger and larger, and they would get runtier and runtier from having to carry their bellies around....We took all from our soil, adding nothing back. Our diligent tilling of the soil, with no cover crops, only hastened the dissipation of the organic matter and subsequently, the loss of essentially all minerals, as well as the sandy hillsides themselves. The loss of the organic matter caused the once loose and crumbly lowlands to convert to baked, cement-like glades....I also know that my baby boy will be slowly starving if he eats food grown off my present poor East Taxas farms." ("Chemurgic Uses for Old and New Crops", Chemurgic Papers, 1946 series, No. 5.)

25 Northbourne, *Look to the Land*, London, 1940, p. 83.

26 David Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasants*, 1952, p. 128.

27 Chemurgic Papers, 1946 series, No. 5.

28 Griscom Morgan, *Vitality and Civilisation*, Chicago, 1947, p. 9.

29 Professor King, quoted in Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, London, 1939, p. 81.

30 The biggest of the Dust Bowls in California has advanced by forty miles in one year while in the whole of the U.S.A. 15,000,000 acres of good land are being spoiled by erosion every year. In Africa, the Sahara is said to be moving southward at a mean rate of over half a mile a year, and the Turkana desert eastward at six or seven miles a year. The Northern Sahara was at one time reputed as the "granary of Rome". And it is believed that the Congo forest which is now separated from it by 1,500 miles of desert or semi-desert, "reached nearly to Khartoum ". — Northbourne, *Look to the Land*, London, 1940, pp. 16-17.

31 General Smuts quoted in Jacks and Whyte, *The Rape of the Earth*, p. 21.

32 Jacks and Whyte, *The Rape of the Earth*, p. 39.

33 *Ibid*, p. 21.

34 *Ibid*, p. 19.

35 *Ibid*, p. 37.

36 Stuart Chase in his *Rich Land, Poor Land* described how a chasm 3,000 acres in extent and 200 feet deep in Georgia (U.S.A.) "started to grow forty years ago from water dripping unheeded off a barn roof and forming a little rill that became a rivulet that became a torrent....Other chasms and gullies, tributaries of this ...cover 40,000 acres in the neighbourhood." In India, in Bardoli in Surat district, one finds narrow gorges from 8 to 20 feet deep enclosed by high clay walls that were formed by rain water running down the tracks left in the soil by cart-wheels.

37 Jacks and Whyte, *The Rape of the Earth*, p. 21.

38 Professor Shaler in the *National Geographic Magazine*, 1896.

39 Royal Commission on Agriculture, 1935, quoted in Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, London, 1939, p. 94.

40 Jacks and Whyte, *The Rape of the Earth*, p. 26.

41 *Ibid*, p. 286.

42 Northbourne, *Look to the Land*, London, 1940, p. 80.

43 *Ibid*, p. 24.

44 Jacks and Whyte, *The Rape of the Earth*, p. 211.

45 Northbourne, *Look to the Land*, London, 1940, p. 25. The process is described by Northbourne thus: "Consider the case of an international loan made by country A to country B to enable B to 'develop'....B *must* sell goods to A or to some other country to get the money with which to pay A....A does not like this, because it undercuts her home prices. So she puts on tariffs and takes other steps to restrict imports. But countries C, D, E, F, etc. are in similar positions....Now countries in B's position are *ex hypothesi* 'undeveloped'. They have areas of virgin or unoccupied land. By despoiling this land of its fertility they can produce food very

cheaply. Those inhabitants of A who are the holders of B's bonds will welcome this because (1) they get their interest; (2) cheap food enables them to cut manufacturing costs; (3) the cry of cheap food is political jam for any one who sees a profit in the system. So B's land is ruined — and so is A's because of the cut prices of food; but nobody who matters seems to mind that much." (pp. 26-27)

46 Jacks and Whyte, *The Rape of the Earth*, p. 282.

47 G. T. Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, London, 1939, p. 144.

48 Northbourne, *Look to the Land*, London, 1940, p. 129.

49 Jacks and Whyte, *The Rape of the Earth*, p. 203.

50 *Ibid*, p. 38.

51 Richard Gregg, *Which Way Lies Hope?*, Ahmedabad, 1952, p. 21.

52 Daniel Bell in *Encounter*, June 1954, p. 13.

53 H. J. Massingham in *The New Statesman and Nation*, December 29, 1951.

54 Edward Hyams in *The New Statesman and Nation*, December 8, 1951.

55 G. T. Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, London, 1939, p. 144.

56 Jacks and Whyte, *The Rape of the Earth*, p. 297.

57 *Harijan*, August 29, 1936, p. 226.

58 *Harijan*, January 25, 1942, p. 16.

59 Albert Gleizes, *Life and Death of the Christian West*, London, 1947, p. 56.

60 Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines*, New York, 1929, p. 206.

61 R. Austin Freeman, *Social Decay and Regeneration*, London, 1921, p. 101.

62 Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines*, New York, 1929, p. 301.

63 *Ibid*, p. 306.

64 William Willcocks, *Ancient Irrigation System of Bengal*, University of Calcutta, 1930, p. 7.

65 *Ibid*, p. 110.

66 *Ibid*, p. 108.

67 *Ibid*, p. 127.

68 *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Fourth Edition, pp. 354-55.

69 *Harijan*, November 2, 1934, pp. 301-02.

70 Prayer speech, December 20, 1947.

71 Virgil Jordan quoted by Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines*, New York, 1929, p. 228.

72 *Ibid*, p. 224.

73 *Ibid*, p. 319.

74 Professor Sihle, quoted in Wrench, *The Wheel of Health*, London, 1938, p. 135.

75 Journal of the American Medical Association, quoted in Richard Gregg, *Which Way Lies Hope?*, Ahmedabad, 1952, p. 26.

76 The report of the Medical Statistics Division of the Office of the Surgeon General of the United States for 1946, quoted in Richard Gregg, *Which Way Lies Hope?*, Ahmedabad, 1952, p. 26.

77 Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines*, New York, 1929, p. 289.

78 *Ibid*, pp. 289-91.

79 R. Austin Freeman, *Social Decay and Regeneration*, London, 1921, p. 23.

80 Richard Gregg, *Which Way Lies Hope?*, 1952, p. 25.

81 Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines*, New York, 1929, p. 156.

82 Wrote Daniel Bell in *Encounter* of June 1954: "If one hopes to provide a new spirit among workers and a new appetite for work, one needs to consider the worker as more than a part of a 'human relation' in a factory. His job must not only feed his body: it must sustain his spirit. One of the fascinating discoveries of an American sociological study, *The Men on the Assembly Line*, by Charles Walker and Robert Guest, is the way in which the men, resenting the mechanical harness to which they are hitched, sought to 'buck the line', in some small way to introduce variety and assert their own work rhythms.... 'One of the most striking findings of this study is the psychological importance of even minute changes in his immediate job experience.' The implication of the Walker and Guest study are fairly simple. Since detailed job breakdown becomes socially (and humanly) self-defeating, the answer lies in job rotation, in job 'enlargement', in lengthening the work cycle, etc. Whatever the narrow losses this entails from the point of view of time-and-motion study, the gain in workers' satisfaction is beyond counting."

83 Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines*, New York, 1929, p. 265.

84 Herbert Read, *Education for Peace*, New York, 1949, p. 44.

85 *Ibid*, p. 45.

86 Writes Herbert Read: "I might as well confess at this point that I daily grow suspicious of what I can only call exhibitionist culture. Exhibitions of painting and sculpture, of French tapestries or Australasian totems; concerts of classical music, of modern music, of Chinese music; operas from Vienna or ballet from Russia — yes, it is all very entertaining, a little exhausting if we care to keep up with the accelerating pace of it all; and no doubt it does increase the curious collection of odd impressions, of disconnected facts and half-remembered names, which we keep in some corner of our cerebellum and call knowledge — and which we dig up from this cloudy and over-crowded receptacle when we want to display our 'culture'. But what does it all mean in the terms of the vital reality which is our daily behaviour and immediate happiness? Very little that I can see." — *Education for Peace*, New York, 1949, p. 46.

87 Stuart Chase has the following to say about the leisure: "In Middletown 'the leisure of virtually all women and of most of the men over thirty is mainly spent sitting down' — in motor car, at the movies, reading or listening to the radio. A few play...while the rest of us shout, clap hands, hurl pop bottles at the umpire, crush in our neighbours' hats, and get what thrill we may from passive rather

than active participation. Our play comes to us, in these circumstances, at one remove from reality. When we watch a score board outside a newspaper office, it comes at two removes....Down the ages we have watched and listened at theatres, bull fights, concerts, but how small a part it has been of the total play activity. Today it is the larger part, and I suspect the ratio is increasing — despite the new golf players and the campers....It ought not to be hard to persuade our fellow citizens to have far more fun for far less money; but who, knowing the strength of the current commercial structure, has any hope of a successful campaign based on such obvious commonsense. ...In the midst of that unbelievable congestion and devastating racket, the entire nation on some bright morning might flee — cursing and praying for deliverance — into the mountains and the wilderness...provided there was any wilderness left to which to flee." — *Men and Machines*, New York, 1929, p. 259.

88 Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines*, New York, 1929, p. 256.

89 Herbert Read, *Education for Peace*, New York, 1949, p. 55.

90 Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines*, New York, 1929, p. 265.

91 Herbert Read, *Education for Peace*, New York, 1949, p. 48.

92 *Harijan*, January 18, 1942, p. 5.

93 Herbert Read, *Education for Peace*, New York, 1949, p. 48.

94 *Ibid*, p. 32.

95 Griscom Morgan, *Vitality and Civilisation*, Chicago, 1947, p. 4.

96 *Ibid*.

97 *Ibid*, p. 9.

98 Writes Jung: "The increasing industrialisation of the countryside, and the growing sense of insecurity, deprive men of many opportunities for giving vent to their affective energies. The peasant's alternating rhythm of work secures him unconscious satisfactions through its symbolical content — satisfactions which the factory workers and office employees do not know and can never enjoy. What do these know of his life with nature, of those grand moments when, as lord and fructifier of the earth, he drives his plough through the soil, and with a kingly gesture scatters the seed for the future harvest; of his rightful fear of the destructive power of the elements; of his joy in the fruitfulness of his wife who bears him the daughters and sons who mean increased working-power and prosperity? From all this we city-dwellers, we modern machine-minders, are far removed.... See how men slink to work, only observe the faces in trains at 7-30 in the morning! One man makes his little wheels go round, another writes things that interest him not at all. What wonder that nearly every man belongs to as many clubs as there are days in the week....To these sources of discontent there is added a further and graver difficulty. Nature has armed defenceless and weaponless man with a vast store of energy, to enable him not only passively to endure the rigours of existence but also to overcome them. She has equipped her son for tremendous hardships. As a rule we are protected from the immediate threat of danger, and for that reason we are daily tempted to excess." — *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, London, 1953, pp. 56-57.

99 Griscom Morgan, *Vitality and Civilisation*, Chicago, 1947, p. 3.

100 *Ibid*, p. 13.

101 Stafford Cripps, *Democracy Upto Date*, London, 1939, p. 19.

102 *Ibid*, p. 21. Sir Stafford Cripps further observes: "Once, however, we acknowledge interference by the State as a necessity, Parliament finds itself involved in a whole field of the most complex activities with demands being made upon it for regulation and help from all sections and classes of people....Once the State interfered with the individual conduct of trade and industry...it is progressively compelled to take a larger and larger share in the regulation of the whole industrial life of the country." (pp. 34-35)

103 Gerald Heard, *Pain, Sex and Time*, London, 1939, p. 236.

104 Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines*, New York, 1929, p. 322.

105 R. Austin Freeman, *Social Decay and Regeneration*, London, 1921, p. 34.

106 *Young India*, May 5, 1927, p. 142.

107 *Young India*, September 15, 1927, p. 313.

108 Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines*, New York, 1929, p. 300.

109 *Ibid*, p. 296.

110 Veblen quoted in Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines*, New York, 1929, p. 299.

111 Aldous Huxley, *Science, Liberty and Peace*, New York, 1946. p. 3.

112 Aldous Huxley, *Science, Liberty and Peace*, New York, 1946, p. 22.

113 *Young India*, February 13, 1930, p. 52.

114 *Young India*, January 29, 1925, p. 41.

115 Wilfred Wellock, *A Mechanistic or a Human Society*, p. 26.

116 *Harijan*, July 26, 1942, p. 238.

117 *Harijan*, July 28, 1946, p. 236.

118 *Ibid.*

119 *Ibid.*

120 *Ibid.*

121 *Ibid.*

122 Northbourne, *Look to the Land*, London, 1940, p. 185.

123 C. E. Murray quoted in *Community Service News*, March-April, 1948.

124 Albert Gleizes, *Life and Death of the Christian West*, London, 1947, p. 96.

125 *Harijan*, February 27, 1937, p. 18.

126 *Harijan*, June 22, 1935, p. 146.

127 *Harijan*, July 28, 1946, p. 236.

128 *Ibid.*

129 *Young India*, June 17, 1926, p. 218.

130 *Young India*, November 13, 1924, p. 378.

131 *Ibid.*

132 *Ibid.*

133 *Harijan*, August 29, 1936, p. 226.

134 *Young India*, November 13, 1924, p. 378.

135 *Harijan*, June 22, 1935, pp. 146-47.

136 *Ibid*, p. 146.

137 *Young India*, November 13, 1924, p. 378.

138 *Harijan*, June 22, 1935, p. 146.

139 Gandhiji quoted by M. N. Chatterjee in *Community Service News*, September-October, 1946, p. 4.

140 *Harijan*, November 2, 1934, p. 303.

141 Aldous Huxley, *Science, Liberty and Peace*, New York, 1946, pp. 28-29.

142 *Harijan*, April 4, 1936, p. 63.

143 *Ibid.*

144 *Harijan*, February 27, 1937, p. 18.

145 *Harijan*, April 4, 1936, p. 64.

146 *Harijan*, October 9, 1937, p. 293.

147 To an American Press correspondent, who met him in London during the Round Table Conference, Gandhiji said: "You see that these nations (Europe and America) are able to exploit the so-called weaker or unorganised races of the world. Once these races gain an elementary knowledge and decide that they are no more going to be exploited, they will simply be satisfied with what they can provide themselves. Mass production, then, at least where the vital necessities are concerned, will disappear." — *Harijan*, November 2, 1934, p. 301.

148 *Young India*, July 25, 1929, p. 244; and *Harijan*, November 16, 1934, p. 316.

149 *Young India*, November 12, 1931, p. 355.

150 *Young India*, December 20, 1928, p. 422.

151 *Harijan*, September 29, 1940, p. 299.

152 *Harijan*, November 4, 1939, p. 331.

153 *Harijan*, January 13, 1940, pp. 410-11.

154 *Harijan*, August 29, 1936, p. 226.

155 *Harijan*, September 1, 1940, p. 271.

156 *Ibid*, p. 272.

157 *Ibid.*

158 *Harijan*, January 13, 1940, p. 411.

159 *Young India*, March 26, 1931, pp. 46-47.

160 *Ibid.*

161 *Young India*, November 15, 1928, p. 381.

162 *Ibid.*

163 In reply to a question raised by some students, Gandhiji said: "What is the system of *Varnashram* but a means of harmonising the difference between high and low, as well as between capital and labour? All that comes from the West on this subject is tarred with the brush of violence. I object to it because I have seen the wreckage

that lies at the end of this road....Let us study our Eastern institutions in that spirit of scientific enquiry and we shall evolve a truer socialism and a truer communism than the world has yet dreamed of. It is surely wrong to presume that Western socialism or communism is the last word on the question of mass poverty." — *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, August 3, 1934, quoted in N. K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, Ahmedabad, 1948, p. 93.

164 In his well-known study on the question of population *The Geography of Hunger*, Josue DeCastro has shown that over-population is not the cause of starvation, "starvation is the cause of over-population." According to him, people suffering from mal-nutrition show a definite increase in fertility due to "a complex process involving both physiological and psychological factors." The incidence of "improvement maternity" too, he found, is higher in the urban areas than in the rural. Gandhiji was, therefore, opposed to artificial methods of population control which suppress the consequence but leave the root of the evil untouched — nay prolong the evil by making endurable an otherwise unendurable state of things. The right remedy, he said, was to raise the nutritional and cultural level of the masses by providing them with healthy occupations amid agreeable rural surroundings which, besides giving them full employment all the year round, would have a high educative and cultural significance.

165 F. Baade quoted in Dr. Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasants*, London, 1952, p. 177.

166 *Ibid.*

167 *Ibid*, p. 128.

168 *Ibid.*

169 John Lossing Buck, referred to by Richard Gregg, *Which Way Lies Hope?*, Ahmedabad, 1957, pp. 136-37.

170 Richard Gregg, *Which Way Lies Hope?*, Ahmedabad, 1957, p. 137.

171 Professor King also reported the following: In the Shantung province in China they found a farmer, who was having 12 in his family. He kept one donkey, one cow, both exclusively labouring animals, and two pigs on 2.5 acres of cultivated land, where he grew wheat, millet, sweet potatoes and beans. "Here is a density of population equal to 3,072 people, 256 donkeys, 256 cattle and 512 swine per square mile. In another instance where the holding was one and two-thirds acres, the farmer had 10 in his family and was maintaining one donkey and one pig, giving to this farmland a maintenance capacity of 3,840 people, 384 donkeys and 384 pigs to the square mile, or 240 people, 24 donkeys and 24 pigs to one of our forty acre farms which our farmers regard too small for a single family." The average of seven Chinese holdings which King and his colleagues visited, and where they obtained similar data, indicated a maintenance capacity for those lands of 1,783 people, 212 cattle or donkeys and 399 swine — 1,995 consumers and 399 rough food transformers per square mile of farm land.

172 Gandhiji was very keenly alive to the need for a radical land reform. He felt it could be brought about by the application of his principle of "trusteeship" and of non-violent non-cooperation. But he had not worked out the precise manner in which the

reform would be accomplished. This has since been done by Vinoba Bhave.

173 Chester Bowles, the former American Ambassador to India, in his *Ambassador's Report* (New York, 1954) observes: "The argument that small holdings of land in the hands of individual owners will mean less production is simply not valid. It confuses the *cost* of production per ton in America with the *amount* of production per acre. We have believed this myth because in the United States, where land is plentiful and labour is scarce and costly, we have found large-scale farming with giant machines highly profitable. But a Long Island farmer with two acres of good land, with plenty of fertilizer and intensive cultivation, could produce more wheat *per acre* than a North Dakota farmer with a tractor combine working a large farm." p. 175.

174 Elmer Pendell, *Population on the Loose*, referred to by Richard Gregg, *Which Way Lies Hope?*, Ahmedabad, 1957, pp. 136-37.

175 Northbourne, *Look to the Land*, London, 1940, pp. 77-78.

176 Prayer speech, December 13, 1947.

177 Metcalfe's Minute of November 7, 1830, quoted in Dutt, *Economic History of India*, 4th edition, p. 346, and p. 386. In a passage that has become classical, Sir Charles Metcalfe, observed: "They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds to revolution...but the village communities remain the same. In times of trouble they arm and fortify themselves; a hostile army passes through the country; the village community collect their cattle within their walls and let the enemy pass unprovoked. If plunder and devastation be directed against themselves and the force employed be irresistible, they flee to friendly villages at a distance, but when the storm has passed over, they return and resume their occupations....A generation may pass away, but the succeeding generation will return. The sons will take the place of their fathers, the same site for the village, the same position for the houses, the same lands will be reoccupied by the descendants of those who were driven out when the village was depopulated; and it is not a trifling matter that will drive them out, for they will often maintain their post through times of disturbance and convulsion, and acquire strength sufficient to resist pillage and oppression with success."

178 In its report the Indian Famine Committee of 1880, observed: "India has a poor law, but it is unwritten; it is owing to the profound sense which is felt by all classes of the religious duty of succouring, according to their means, the indigent and helpless who have claims on them as members of the family, the caste, or the town or village that in ordinary times no State measures of relief are needed." — Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, London, 1939, p. 101.

179 Mildred Stroope quoted by A. E. Morgan in *Community Service News*, May-June 1951, p. 80.

180 Sir William Sleeman in *Rambles and Recollections*, 1844, quoted in Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, London, 1939, p. 106.

181 The Irrigation Committee's Report of 1901-1903, quoted in Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, London, 1939, p. 105.

182 Strange though it may seem, it is nevertheless a fact that taking over charge of education by the British Government was actually followed by a decline in the percentage of literacy. The following by an eminent educationist appeared in *Young India* of December 29, 1920 and of January 19, 1921: "The village education was an essential part of the village administration and the provision for it was made in the village expenses....There was in every village in the Punjab, a school of some sort, in which elementary education... was imparted either free of cost, or at a nominal rate of monthly fee. In addition to these schools, there were spread all over the Province 'colleges' of various grades and denominations in which the ancient ideals of the academies were kept alive and potent. There were centres of advanced study of metaphysics, astronomy, mathematics, grammar, philosophy and other sciences....'The indigenous village schools are a part of the village system and that they have formed a model to schools in England.' Again they (Court of Directors) point out 'this venerable and benevolent institution of the Hindus is represented to have withstood the shock of revolutions, and to its operation is ascribed the general intelligence of the natives.' There were 30,000 indigenous schools, and...a...number of colleges, giving instruction to about 4 lakhs scholars. In 1856, the Education Department was established....One per cent village education Cess...was levied...for improving indigenous schools....In 1860...the executive management of the vernacular schools...(was) transferred to the Deputy Commissioner in charge of districts....The immediate effect of the transfer of vernacular schools from the management of the Officers of the Department to district officers was *a large reduction in the number of schools* and led to a considerable fluctuation in attendance. (Vide Education Report, 1862-63)...*The net result of this experiment* was that the number of schools fell from 2,171 in 1858-59 to 1,853 in 1859-60...and to 1,526 in 1881-82."

183 Sir F. S. Lely, writing his suggestion regarding "Better Government in India in 1906" with special reference to his own Province of Bombay, remarked on the Government's interference with the indigenous system as follows: "Our village sanitary requirements are a constant irritation. The truth is the habits of the people are more cleanly than those of corresponding Europeans, though following up the old, old mistake, we imagine they are not simple because they are different." Sir Lely believed that if powers had been given to the Panchayat, it would have brought in better sanitation on village lines. The linking up of the village watchman with the British official police aroused the wrath of an experienced administrator like Monroe. To absorb the watchman in a British modelled police, Monroe warned, would be fatal to any true police decency.—Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, London, 1939, p. 103.

184 J. Rutaj, *Peasant International in Action*, quoted in Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasants*, London, 1952, p. 276.

185 Northbourne, *Look to the Land*, London, 1940, p. 122.

186 *Ibid*, p. 143.

187 Ronald Duncan, an Oxford Don, poet, dramatist and writer of distinction was an associate of Dick Sheppard, the English pacifist. He came to Sevagram to find an answer from Gandhiji to some of the questions arising out of his pacifist activities. Impressed by Gandhiji's view that the English people had to become "Little Englanders" and attain self-sufficiency in food before they could afford to be sincerely peace-loving, he engaged, on his return to England, in an experiment in community farming as a part of his pacifist striving. In his book *Journal of a Husbandman* (Faber and Faber Ltd., London), describing the experiment, he has shown how rural credit based on a currency that is not of the farmer's making puts the farming community at a disadvantage: "Talking about farming, one touches on numerous subjects and innumerable grumbles, one bumps into this difficulty and that snag but all the time one is talking about *credit*. It is the reason why the ditches are silted and the thatch rotten. It is the reason why, and no subsidy or poultice can remedy this sagging wastage which is dragging the English village into a galvanised improvisation. You cannot state the position more clearly than this: the Bank's rate of interest on loans is higher than the margin of profit which present prices allow to return to the land. It is an old sore.... The Banks can create credit by writing on paper. I cannot pay interest by writing on paper. If the Bank lent me seed I could pay them in wheat. They lend me paper. I must pay them in paper. Paper which they can make and I can't. And to pay them in their paper, I must sell my wheat to some merchant at his price. Soon the merchant will get the wheat, the Bank will get the field, and I shall sit on the gate holding a piece of paper." (p. 46)

188 Dr. Oswald Spengler in his *The Decline of the West*, quoted in Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, London, 1939, p. 123.

189 G. T. Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, London, 1939, p. 110.

190 *Ibid*, p. 124.

191 *Ibid*, p. 113.

192 Ronald Duncan in his book makes the following observations on these experiments of Gandhiji's: "It is absurd to see so much land as rich as this derelict because one has not the coins to till it. We are trying barter....And the more of this the better: better than selling our plough to get coins for his barley and he selling his barley to pay for our ploughing; for that way both the plough and the barley leave for London, out of this district....The Indian peasant is now trying to produce his own basic currency: after a century of tyranny, being tied by the feet and hair to Bombay rupee he has produced a note backed by his own hand-spun cotton cloth. Each district wants its own mill so that the wheat offal, the bran, shall stay where it grew. And each district needs its own Bank so that it can regulate its own credit according to its needs. Neither of which is likely to occur, for those who talk about International Stabilised Currency have the platform, believing that if a thing, a scheme, is *big* it is *better*. Perhaps sexual impotency lies at the bottom of this tendency in Western man to merge things or perhaps he is trying to lose himself under the blanket of them. As the next best thing to a note backed by a local product I have tried barter—and neighbouring farmers accept this. And the more the merrier. But the charges we have to

meet outside our own circle show that farming by comparison to other trades is a very poor relation." — *Journal of a Husbandman*, Faber and Faber, London, p. 49.

193 *Harijan*, March 25, 1939, p. 65.

194 *Ibid*, p. 64.

195 Compare with this the following from Ronald Duncan's book: "It is interesting to compare a farmer's charges with a doctor's fees. For the doctor has recently sent me a bill for fifteen guineas on account of attending to a member of my family on three or four separate interviews of five or ten minutes' duration, putting in two or three stitches in two or three minutes. On his side there is the expenditure of an hour's work, and a few inches of horse hair — on our side sixteen hours' work, petrol, oil and a tree, plus an element of risk, always a factor with a circular saw. Now the standard reply to this discrepancy is that the doctor has to recoup for an expensive training. And this is no doubt true, but the farmer also has an expensive training and what is more the paraphernalia of his trade is constantly depreciating. His tractor wears and needs replacing but the doctor carries his trade in his head....It is quite plain that the base for this discrepancy is largely snobbery. The doctor's wife must have a maid but the farmer's wife must scrub the dishes." — *Journal of a Husbandman*, Faber and Faber, London, p. 50.

196 Gandhiji, *Hind Swaraj*, Ahmedabad, 1946, pp. 44-45.

197 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947, p. 42.

198 *Ibid.*

199 Gerald Heard, *Pain, Sex and Time*, London, 1939, p. 234.

200 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947, p. 54.

201 H. J. Massingham in his Foreword to Albert Gleizes, *Life and Death of the Christian West*, London, 1947, p. 8.

202 *Harijan*, June 29, 1935, p. 156.

203 H. S. Canby (ed.), *Works of Thoreau*, Boston, 1946, pp. 784-85.

204 *Harijan*, June 29, 1935, p. 156.

205 Gandhiji, *From Yeravda Mandir*, Ahmedabad, 1945, pp. 35-36.

206 *Harijan*, June 29, 1935, p. 156.

207 Gandhiji, *From Yeravda Mandir*, Ahmedabad, 1945, p. 36.

208 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, London, 1913, pp. 295-96.

209 *Harijan*, November 4, 1939, p. 331.

210 *Young India*, January 14, 1932, p. 17.

211 Gandhiji's statement on the eve of San Francisco Conference, April, 1945.

212 *Ibid.*

213 *Harijan*, October 14, 1939, p. 301.

214 *Harijan*, February 11, 1939, p. 8.

215 *Harijan*, May 16, 1936, p. 109. In 1931 Gandhiji wrote: "Merely to refuse military service is not enough. To refuse to render military service when the particular time arrives is to do the thing after all the time for combating the evil is practically gone. Military service is only a symptom of the disease which is deeper. I suggest to you that those who are not on the register of military service are equally participating in the crime if they support the State otherwise. . . .Each man old or young takes part in the sin by contributing to the maintenance of the State by paying the taxes. That is why I said to myself during the war that, so long as I ate wheat supported by the army whilst I was doing everything short of being a soldier, it was best for me to enlist in the army and be shot; otherwise I should retire to the mountains and eat food grown by nature. Therefore all those who want to stop military service can do so by withdrawing all cooperation. Refusal of military service is much more superficial than non-cooperation with the whole system which supports the State." — *Young India*, December 31, 1931, p. 426.

216 *Harijan*, April 20, 1940, p. 96.

217 *Ibid.*

218 *Harijan*, February 10, 1940, p. 441.

219 *Harijan*, October 7, 1939, p. 293.

220 See Appendix A.

221 *Young India*, December 31, 1931.

222 *Harijan*, April 13, 1940, p. 90.

223 *Harijan*, December 24, 1938, p. 395.

224 *Harijan*, June 22, 1940, p. 172.

225 *Harijan*, December 24, 1938, p. 394.

226 *Harijan*, January 28, 1939, p. 442.

227 *Harijan*, July 28, 1940, p. 227.

228 *Harijan*, September 8, 1940, p. 276.

229 *Ibid.*

230 *Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government*, 1942-44, Ahmedabad, 1945, p. 169.

231 *Harijan*, January 13, 1940, p. 411.

232 *Harijan*, October 15, 1938, p. 290.

233 *Harijan*, November 12, 1938, p. 328.

234 *Harijan*, April 15, 1939, p. 90.

235 *Harijan*, October 14, 1939, p. 305.

236 *Ibid*, p. 304.

237 Gandhiji quoted in Louis Fischer, *A Week with Gandhi*, Bombay, 1944, p. 64.

238 *Harijan*, December 30, 1939, p. 391.

239 *Young India*, July 2, 1931, p. 161.

240 *Ibid.*

241 *Harijan*, October 14, 1939, p. 304.

242 *Harijan*, September 15, 1946, p. 312.

243 *Harijan*, February 24, 1946, p. 20.

244 *Harijan*, September 1, 1940, p. 268.

245 *Ibid.*

246 See Pyarelal, *A pilgrimage for Peace*, Ahmedabad, 1950, p. 73.

247 *Harijan*, October 13, 1940, p. 319.

248 *Ibid.*

249 *Ibid.*

250 *Ibid.*

251 *Harijan*, September 1, 1940, p. 268.

252 *Harijan*, October 13, 1940, p. 318.

253 *Ibid.*

254 *Ibid.*

255 *Harijan*, April 7, 1946, p. 74.

256 *Harijan*, October 13, 1940, p. 318.

257 *Ibid.*

258 *Ibid.*

259 *Ibid*, pp. 318-19.

260 *Ibid*, p. 319.

261 *Harijan*, September 1, 1940, p. 268.

262 *Ibid.*

263 *Ibid.*

264 *Ibid.*

265 *Harijan*, October 13, 1940, p. 318.

266 *Ibid.*

267 *Ibid.*

268 *Ibid.*

269 *Ibid.*

270 Gandhiji quoted in Mirabehn, *Gleanings*, Ahmedabad, 1949, p. 16.

271 *Ibid*, p. 17.

272 *Harijan*, September 1, 1940, p. 268.

273 *Ibid.*

274 *Harijan*, September 15, 1940, p. 285.

275 *Ibid.*

276 *Harijan*, October 13, 1940, p. 319.

277 *Ibid.*

278 *Ibid.*

279 *Harijan*, August 21, 1940, p. 215.

280 "The Paradise within the Reach of All Men without Labour, by Powers of Nature and Machienry. An address to all intelligent Men. In two Parts" by J. A. Etzler.

281 H. S. Canby (ed.), *The Works of Thoreau*, Boston, 1946, p. 788.

282 Speech delivered at the Y.M.C.A., Madras, on February 16, 1916, *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Fourth Edition, pp. 384-85.

283 *Harijan*, August 25, 1940, p. 260.

284 *Young India*, November 26, 1931, p. 368.

285 *Young India*, November 5, 1931, p. 334.

286 *Harijan*, March 16, 1947, p. 67.

287 Prayer speech, February 2, 1947.

288 *Ibid.*

289 *Harijan*, June 1, 1947, p. 172.

290 *Harijan*, March 31, 1946, p. 64.

291 The idea of a subsidiary occupation for the mill hands was first conceived by Gandhiji during the eventful twenty-three days' strike of the Ahmedabad mill hands in the year 1918. It occurred to him then that if the strike was to be successful the mill hands must have an occupation that would maintain them wholly or partly. They must not rely upon doles. During the strike many of them were employed on unskilled labour. Writing in *Harijan* of July 3, 1937, Gandhiji recalled: "It was then that I mooted my suggestion to teach mill hands a subsidiary occupation. But my suggestion remained a dead letter till the next strike came. A sort of a beginning was made then. But it was difficult to bring into being all of a sudden an effective organisation for teaching subsidiary occupations. An organised and systematic effort is now being made by the Labour Union (of Ahmedabad) in that direction. Mill hands are being taught to select occupations which they can practise in their leisure hours at home and which would give them substantial relief in times of unemployment. These are ginning, cleaning, carding and spinning of cotton, weaving, tailoring, soap and paper-making, type-setting etc.... The intelligence of the working man is cramped by his soulless, mechanical occupation, which leaves him little scope or chance to develop his mind.... Let him only be organised along right lines and have his intelligence quickened, let him learn a variety of occupations, and he will be able to go about with his head erect and never be afraid of being without means of sustenance."

292 *Harijan*, July 3, 1937, p. 161.

293 *Modern Review*, October 1935, quoted in Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Studies in Gandhism*, Calcutta, 1947, pp. 203-4.

294 *Ibid*, p. 204.

295 *Ibid*, pp. 202-3.

296 *Ibid*, pp. 203-4.

297 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947, pp. xvii-xviii.

298 Gandhiji quoted in Mirabehn, *Gleanings*, Ahmedabad, 1949, p. 15.

299 Austin Freemen defines a political parasite as one for whom a 'job' is created and who "produces a destruction of wealth out of all proportion to his actual consumption. His salary may be no more than one or two thousand a year; and this modest sum represents his actual consumption. But to enable him to acquire this income, a huge and a costly machinery must be brought into existence; expensive premises must be provided, well sprinkled with telephones and furnished with costly fittings; deputies, assistants and a great staff of

clerks must be appointed and various other expenses incurred. And then beyond all this destruction of wealth is the further destruction which results from his activities; the interference with the normal activities of individuals throughout the country, the disturbance of normal social adjustments and the enormous waste of time."—*Social Decay and Regeneration*, London, 1921, p. 214.

300 B. Atkinson (ed.), *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, New York, 1937, p. 659.

301 *Harijan*, August 4, 1940, p. 235.

302 *Ibid.*

303 *Ibid.*

304 *Ibid.*

305 Northbourne, *Look to the Land*, London, 1940, p. 189.

CHAPTER XXII

1 "On the Pont au Change, on the Place de Greve, in long sheds, Mercier, in these summer evenings, saw working men at their repast. One's allotment of daily bread has sunk to an ounce and a half....At these frugal tables, the cook's gridiron hissing near by, and the pot simmering on a fire between two stones, I have seen them ranged by the hundred; consuming, without bread, their scant messes, far too moderate for the keenness of their appetite, and the extent of their stomach."— Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, Vol. II, p. 425.

2 *Ibid*, p. 414.

3 *Ibid*, p. 404.

4 *Ibid*, p. 416.

5 Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru, July 17, 1947.

6 Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru, July 28, 1947.

7 Gandhiji to Lord Mountbatten, July 28, 1947.

8 Pandit Nehru to Gandhiji, July 28, 1947.

9 Lord Mountbatten in a letter to Pyarelal.

10 *Harijan*, August 24, 1947, p. 289.

11 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947, p. 53.

12 *Young India*, August 6, 1925, p. 276.

13 *Harijan*, November 2, 1947, p. 392.

14 *Young India*, September 10, 1931, p. 255.

15 Aldous Huxley, *Science, Liberty and Peace*, New York, 1946, pp. 32-33.

16 Khruschev's speech in the Supreme Soviet, November, 1957.

17 Aldous Huxley, *Science, Liberty and Peace*, New York, 1946, p. 33.

18 *Harijan*, January 9, 1937, p. 383.

19 R. K. Prabhu (ed.), *India of My Dreams*, Bombay, 1947, p. 25.

20 *Young India*, April 17, 1924, p. 130.

21 *Young India*, June 24, 1926, p. 226.

22 *Young India*, October 6, 1921, p. 314.

23 *Young India*, June 24, 1926, p. 226.

24 *Young India*, April 17, 1924, p. 130.

25 *Harijan*, May 16, 1936, p. 112.

26 *Harijan*, August 17, 1947, p. 280.

27 Nor was this experience typical of India alone. Elsewhere too the habit of dependence on the State has had the effect of delaying unnecessarily the solution of the people's problems. Referring to housing shortage in England, after the first World War, Austin Freeman wrote: "What would our own ancestors have done? Would they have gone houseless while the raw material of the builder lay all around them? And while the 'State' filled tons of stationary with 'Proposals for a Housing Scheme'? Assuredly they would not. If they could not have made their own brick, then timber or cob or wattle and daub or boulder and clay or whatever their neighbourhood afforded would have been used. They would no more have dreamed of asking 'the State' to build their houses than to comb their hair. But the modern man, accustomed to rely upon great organisations for the supply of all his needs, and quite unfamiliar with the idea of self-help, when the industrial organisation breaks down, turns helplessly to the State; regardless of the fact that this agency which he calls on to house him shows so little capability of housing itself that it was still to be seen eighteen months after the cessation of war, squatting like some monstrous cuckoo in hotels, picture-galleries and other buildings created by individual enterprise and taken forcibly from their rightful owners." — *Social Decay and Regeneration*, London, 1921, pp. 172-73.

28 *Harijan*, November 23, 1947, p. 419.

29 Prayer speech, January 26, 1948.

30 *Harijan*, April 2, 1938, p. 65.

31 *Harijan*, November 2, 1947, p. 389.

32 Prayer speech, November 6, 1947.

33 *Harijan*, November 2, 1947, p. 389.

34 Prayer speech, November 3, 1947.

35 Prayer speech, October 17, 1947.

36 *Ibid.*

37 Prayer speech, November 3, 1947.

38 Prayer speech, October 17, 1947.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Prayer speech, December 8, 1947.

41 *Ibid.*

42 Prayer speech, January 5, 1948.

43 *Ibid.*

44 Prayer speech, December 19, 1947.

45 The prices of food-stuffs per maund stood as follows:

	Before decontrol.	First week of Jan.	Middle of Jan.
Wheat	35—50	18—20	9
Rice	30—45	25	20
Maize	30—32	15—17	
Gram	38—40	16—18	
Moong	35—38	26	20

46 Prayer speech, January 5, 1948.

47 Prayer speech, December 28, 1947

48 *Harijan*, May 27, 1939, p. 143.

49 Prayer speech, December 8, 1947.

50 *Harijan*, January 18, 1948, p. 516.

51 *Harijan*, May 18, 1940, p. 129.

52 *Ibid.*

53 *Harijan*, May 27, 1939, p. 143.

54 *Harijan*, May 18, 1940, p. 129.

55 This has been attempted for the West by Richard Gregg in his *Pacifist Programme, In Time of War, Threatened War or Fascism*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet No. 5.

56 *Young India*, January 9, 1930, p. 13.

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Harijan*, January 28, 1939, p. 443.

59 *Harijan*, August 18, 1940, p. 253.

60 *Harijan*, March 30, 1940, p. 70.

61 *Harijan*, November 18, 1939, p. 344.

62 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947, p. xv.

63 *Ibid*, pp. xv-xvi.

64 *Ibid.*

65 *Ibid*, pp. xvi-xvii.

66 *Young India*, July 2, 1931, p. 162.

67 *Young India*, November 1, 1928, p. 363.

68 Mahadev Desai, *With Gandhiji in Ceylon*, Madras, 1928, p. 93

69 *Young India*, July 2, 1931, p. 162.

70 Gandhiji's speech before the Gujarat Political Conference, *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Fourth Edition, p. 408.

71 Gandhiji, *Ethical Religion*, Madras, 1922, pp. 39-40.

72 *Harijan*, September 29, 1946, p. 333.

73 *Young India*, July 2, 1931, p. 162.

74 *Ibid.*

75 *Harijan*, September 15, 1946, p. 309.

76 *Ibid.*

77 *Harijan*, April 13, 1940, p. 90.

78 *Harijan*, September 15, 1946, p. 309.

79 *Ibid.*

80 *Harijan*, March 9, 1940, p. 31.

81 *Harijan*, February 11, 1939, p. 8.

82 *Young India*, January 12, 1928, p. 12.

83 *Harijan*, July 21, 1940, p. 211.

84 *Harijan*, August 25, 1940 pp. 261-62.

85 *Harijan*, September 1, 1940, p. 263.

86 *Ibid.*

87 *Ibid.*

88 *Harijan*, August 25, 1940, p. 262.

89 *Harijan*, November 4, 1939, p. 332.

90 *Harijan*, July 21, 1940, p. 209.

91 *Harijan*, February 1, 1948, p. 4.

92 *Harijan*, October 14, 1939, p. 304.

93 *Harijan*, October 12, 1935, p. 276.

94 *Young India*, August 11, 1920, p. 4.

95 *Young India*, May 20, 1926, p. 184.

CHAPTER XXIII

1 Press statement of Latifur Rahman, September 25, 1947.

2 Sardar Patel's speech at Lucknow, January 6, 1948.

3 Chaudhary Khaliquzaman, leader of the Muslim League Party in the Constituent Assembly of India, in a statement dated 16th September, 1947 said: "I was surprised to read the proceedings of the West Punjab Muslim League Council wherein Malik Feroz Khan Noon supported a resolution for imparting military training to every youth in Pakistan as he feared there was a suspicion of attack by the enemies of Pakistan. Malik Saheb forgets that there is a section of a majority community in India which is also engaged in sowing the seeds of suspicion and mistrust by propagating the hostile designs of Pakistan against India....The West Punjab Muslim League Council would do well to leave the Government to deal with the more urgent work of rehabilitation rather than divert its attention to such delicate issues which are bound to create serious complications for both the Governments and make minorities a pawn in the game of party politics. In fact, the League Council ought to have considered seriously the laudable attitude adopted by Mahatma Gandhi in advising the minorities to return to their homes and the majorities concerned to give them assurance of protection and security. To do that much will have to be forgotten, and much to be forgiven, but whether it is done or not Mahatma Gandhi has said the right thing and sounded a right note."

4 Press statement of Latifur Rahman, September 25, 1947.

5 Prayer speech, December 22, 1947.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

9 Prayer speech, December 29, 1947.

10 Gandhiji to Sardar Patel, November 29, 1947.

11 Gandhiji quoted in Mirabehn, *Gleanings*, Ahmedabad, 1949, p. 26.

12 Prayer speech, January 7, 1948.

13 Sardar Patel's speech at Lucknow, January 6, 1948.

14 *Ibid.*

15 Ghulam Mohammad's statement, January 8, 1948.

16 Pandit Nehru's statement at the Press conference, January 2, 1948.

17 Prayer speech, January 15, 1948.

18 Prayer speech, January 13, 1948.

19 The story of *Gajendra moksha* or the "deliverance and salvation of the king of the elephants" comes in the ancient Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavata* — a collection of narrative poems embodying profound philosophical truths of Hindu religion. Two brothers Ha-Ha and Hu-Hu, being visited with a curse for bearing ill-will towards each other in a previous birth were reborn as the king of the elephants, Gajendra, and a crocodile respectively. The elephant king was seized by the crocodile when the elephant entered the river to drink water, and was dragged down into the midstream. When only the tip of his trunk remained above water the elephant, exhausted by the vain struggle against the strength of the crocodile, abandoning all further struggle prayed to God for deliverance with all his remaining strength and, as a symbol of his self-surrender, offered a lotus flower to the Lord at the tip of his disappearing trunk. That very instant, the Lord came to his rescue and he was delivered from the jaws of the crocodile. The two brothers having worked out their sin against the law of love, were again restored to their original form with the light of love rekindled in their hearts. The moral of the tale is that in real testing time personal prowess avail us nothing. Deliverance comes when realising our utter nothingness we cease to rely on our strength and pray for and seek the help of the Helpless in all humility.

20 *Harijan*, January 18, 1948, p. 517.

21 Prayer speech, January 15, 1948.

22 *Ibid.*

23 *Ibid.*

24 Sardar Patel's speech at Bombay, January 16, 1948.

25 Prayer speech, January 20, 1948.

26 *Thought*, Delhi, July 16, 1949, p. 13.

27 Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, London, 1951, pp. 65-66; from a lecture delivered in 1942.

28 Prayer speech, January 19, 1948.

29 In 1939 the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot State after announcing popular democratic reforms to the people under the advice of his

Chief Minister Darbar Vira Wala went back on his word. Thereupon Gandhiji, after prolonged and fruitless negotiations, declared a fast unto death to make the Thakore Saheb implement his solemn pledge. On the fourth day of his fast, however, he wired to Lord Linlithgow, the then Viceroy of India, to intervene in the matter. As a result of the Viceroy's intervention, the Darbar agreed to refer the dispute to arbitration. Chief Justice of India, Sir Maurice Gwyer gave an award against the Darbar and in favour of Gandhiji. The Darbar, however, proved cleverer than all the parties concerned and taking advantage of some loop-holes managed practically to undo the award. After deep introspection Gandhiji came to the conclusion that there was a flaw in his fast inasmuch as while on the one hand he was addressing the appeal of vicarious suffering to the Darbar to effect a change of heart in him, he had at the same time appealed to the Viceroy to put pressure on him. This had vitiated his experiment in non-violence. If the Darbar had agreed to arbitration purely as a result of Gandhiji's fast, he would not have sought to get out of his commitment afterwards. Having discovered his error Gandhiji decided to throw away the fruit of his victory. He accordingly wrote to the Viceroy renouncing the award and communicated the same to the Darbar also.

30 *Young India,* October 23, 1924, p. 354.

31 Mirabehn (ed.), *Bapu's Letters to Mira,* Ahmedabad, 1949, p. 242.

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Young India,* March 24, 1920.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Mirabehn (ed.), *Bapu's Letters to Mira,* Ahmedabad, 1949, p. 241.

37 *Young India,* March 24, 1920.

38 *Harijan,* November 2, 1935, p. 299.

39 *Harijan,* July 8, 1933, p. 4.

40 Gandhiji quoted in Mirabehn, *Gleanings,* Ahmedabad, 1949, p. 9.

41 *Harijan,* April 15, 1933, p. 4.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Harijan,* July 8, 1933, p. 4.

44 *Harijan,* May 6, 1933, p. 1.

45 *Young India,* March 24, 1920.

46 *Young India,* September 25, 1924, p. 319.

47 *Young India,* March 19, 1925, p. 95.

48 Polak, Brailsford and Pethick-Lawrence, *Mahatma Gandhi,* London, 1949, p. 199.

49 Gandhiji quoted in Mirabehn, *Gleanings,* Ahmedabad, 1949, p. 9.

50 Polak, Brailsford and Pethick-Lawrence, *Mahatma Gandhi,* London, 1949, p. 199.

51 Chandrashankar Shukla (ed.), *Conversations of Gandhiji*, Bombay, 1949, p. 127.

52 *Harijan*, March 18, 1939, p. 56.

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Harijan*, April 21, 1946, p. 93.

55 *Ibid.*

56 *Harijan*, March 18, 1939, p. 56.

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Harijan*, September 9, 1933, p. 5.

59 Gandhiji to Sir Reginald Maxwell, July 21, 1943; *Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government*, 1942-44, Ahmedabad, 1957, p. 63.

60 Gandhiji to Lord Herbert Samuel, May 15, 1943; *Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government*, 1942-44, Ahmedabad, 1957, p. 81.

61 *Harijan*, September 9, 1933, p. 5.

62 *Ibid.*

63 *Ibid.*

64 *Harijan*, October 13, 1940, p. 322.

65 *Ibid.*

66 *Ibid.*

67 *Young India*, May 1, 1924, p. 145.

68 *Ibid.*

69 *Ibid.*

70 *Young India*, September 30, 1926, p. 342.

71 *Harijan*, October 13, 1940, p. 322.

72 *Young India*, May 1, 1924, p. 145.

73 In *Young India* Gandhiji wrote: "If fasting with a view to recovering money is to be encouraged, there would be no end of scoundrels blackmailing people by resorting to this means....The triumph of Satyagraha consists in meeting death in the insistence on truth. A Satyagrahi is always unattached to the attainment of the object of Satyagraha; one seeking to recover money cannot be unattached. I am therefore clear that fasting for the sake of personal gain is nothing short of intimidation and the result of ignorance." — *Young India*, September 30, 1926, p. 342.

74 *Harijan*, September 9, 1933, p. 5.

75 *Ibid.*

76 Tendulkar and others (ed.), *Gandhiji: His Life and Work*, Bombay, 1944, p. 369.

77 *Harijan*, April 21, 1946, p. 93.

78 *Harijan*, October 13, 1940, p. 322.

79 *Ibid.*

80 Gandhiji laid down the following rules for a fast: (1) Conserve your energy, both physical and mental, from the very beginning. (2) You must cease to think of food whilst you are fasting.

(3) Drink as much cold water as you can, with or without soda and salt, but in small quantities at a time (water should be boiled, strained and cooled). Do not be afraid of salt and soda, because most water contains both these salts in a free state. (4) Have a warm sponge bath daily. (5) Take an enema regularly during the fast. You will be surprised at the impurities you will expel daily. (6) Sleep as much as possible in the open air. (7) Bathe in the morning sun. A sun and air bath is at least as great a purifier as a water bath. (8) Think of anything else but the fast. (9) No matter from what motive you are fasting, during this precious time, think of your Maker, and of your relation to Him and His other creation. You will make discoveries you may not have even dreamed of. — Tendulkar and others (ed.), *Gandhiji: His Life and Work*, Bombay, 1944, p. 371.

81 Tendulkar and others (ed.), *Gandhiji: His Life and Work*, Bombay, 1944, p. 368.

82 *Young India*, December 31, 1931, p. 428.

83 *Harijan*, October 7, 1939, p. 299.

84 *Harijan*, May 6, 1933, p. 4.

85 Pyarelal, *Epic Fast*, Ahmedabad, 1932, p. 34.

86 *The Diary of Mahadev Desai*, Vol. I, Ahmedabad, 1953, p. 275.

87 *Ibid.*

88 Gandhiji quoted in Hingorani (ed.), *God is Truth*, Bombay, 1957, p. 33.

89 *Young India*, August 4, 1920, p. 3.

90 *Harijan*, October 7, 1939, p. 299.

91 *Harijan*, May 6, 1933, p. 1.

92 *Harijan*, July 8, 1933, p. 4.

93 *Harijan*, May 14, 1938, p. 110.

94 *Ibid.*

95 *Ibid.*

96 *The Diary of Mahadev Desai*, Vol. I, Ahmedabad, 1953, p. 275.

97 *Harijan*, May 6, 1933, p. 4.

98 Gandhiji quoted in Hingorani (ed.), *God is Truth*, Bombay, 1957, p. 41.

99 Pyarelal, *Epic Fast*, Ahmedabad, 1932, p. 140.

100 Gandhiji quoted in Hingorani (ed.), *God is Truth*, Bombay, 1957, p. 35.

CHAPTER XXIV

1 Gandhiji to Kishorlal Mashruwala, January 29, 1948.

2 *Harijan*, January 18, 1948, p. 516.

3 Prayer speech, January 22, 1948.

4 This was later published in *Harijan* of February 22, 1948, under the caption "Some Helpful Suggestions".

5 After a most careful and exhaustive inquiry from first witnesses on the spot that I made at the time, I am convinced that the last words that issued from Gandhiji's mouth as he lost consciousness were not "Hey Rama!" but "Rama, Rama" — not an invocation but simple remembrance of the Name. "Hey Rama!" was the expression we inscribed and hung up before Gandhiji's seat in the Detention Camp, Poona, during his twenty-one day fast in 1943. Substitution of "Hey Rama" for "Rama Rama", the actual words used, is another instance of popular errors getting imbedded in the matrix of history like insects in pieces of amber and staying put there.

6 *Harijan*, June 2, 1946, p. 168.

7 *Harijan*, March 3, 1939, p. 34.

8 *Young India*, September 25, 1924, p. 313.

CHAPTER XXV

1 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947, p. 90.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Harijan*, December 24, 1938, p. 394.

4 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947, p. 17.

5 Vivekananda quoted in Romain Rolland, *Prophets of the New India*, New York, 1930, p. 526.

6 *Ibid*, p. 526.

7 *Ibid*, p. 641.

8 *Young India*, March 10, 1920, p. 3.

9 *Young India*, September 23, 1926, p. 332.

10 *Young India*, November 10, 1921, p. 362.

11 *Harijan*, October 6, 1946, p. 342.

12 Gandhiji, *From Yeravda Mandir*, Ahmedabad, 1935, pp. 68-70.

13 *Young India*, September 23, 1926, p. 332.

14 *Harijan*, April 2, 1938, p. 65.

15 H. G. Wells quoted in Van Teslar, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, New York, 1925, p. xii.

16 Gerald Heard, *The Eternal Gospel*, New York, 1946, p. 221.

17 *Harijan*, March 14, 1936, p. 39.

18 *Harijan*, September 26, 1936, p. 260.

19 *Young India*, October 1, 1931, p. 287.

20 *Harijan*, May 14, 1938, p. 114.

21 N. K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, Ahmedabad, 1948, p. 8.

22 *Harijan*, September 8, 1940, p. 275.

23 *Young India*, December 31, 1931, p. 428.

24 *Young India*, December 4, 1924, p. 398.

25 *Young India*, February 10, 1927, p. 44.

26 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947, p. 82.

27 *Ibid*, p. 85.

28 Gerald Heard, *Pain, Sex and Time*, London, 1939, p. 298.

29 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947, p. xiv.

30 Gerald Heard, *Pain, Sex and Time*, London, 1939, p. 6.

31 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947, p. 82.

32 *Harijan*, September 24, 1938, p. 266.

33 *Harijan*, February 22, 1942, p. 48.

34 *Harijan*, May 1, 1937, p. 93.

35 *Young India*, September 23, 1926, p. 332.

36 *Harijan*, February 22, 1942, p. 48.

37 *Young India*, September 23, 1926, p. 332.

38 *Harijan*, November 4, 1939, p. 332.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Gandhiji quoted in Mirabehn, *Gleanings*, Ahmedabad, 1949, p. 14.

41 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947, p. 17.

42 *Harijan*, July 21, 1940, p. 214.

43 Buddha's followers were not to engage in forbidden occupations, such as traders in weapons, butchers, publicans and poison sellers. They were forbidden from becoming soldiers.

44 *Harijan*, September 8, 1940, p. 277.

45 *Ibid.*

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Harijan*, April 7, 1946, p. 74.

49 *Harijan*, March 20, 1937, p. 42.

50 *Harijan*, July 21, 1940, p. 210.

51 *Ibid.*

52 Richard Gregg, *A Compass for Civilisation*, Ahmedabad, 1956, p. 168.

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Harijan*, March 20, 1937, p. 42.

55 *Ibid.*

56 *Young India,* July 2, 1925, p. 232.

57 S. Radhakrishnan, *Bhagawat Gita,* p. 194.

58 *Young India,* June 1, 1921, p. 174.

59 S. Radhakrishnan, *Bhagawat Gita,* p. 194.

60 *Young India,* July 2, 1925, p. 232.

61 *Harijan,* July 21, 1940, p. 210.

62 *Ibid,* p. 211.

63 Gandhiji quoted in Catlin, *In the Path of Mahatma Gandhi,* London, 1948, p. 322.

64 *Harijan,* June 15, 1940, p. 161.

65 *Harijan,* May 1946, p. 140.

66 *Harijan,* December 24, 1938, pp. 394-95.

67 *Harijan,* March 20, 1937, pp. 41-42.

68 "Since we cannot govern them, we shall be driven to destroy them. Never doubt it. Always in a state of insubordination, brewing rebellion in their inflammatory minds, they will one day burst forth upon us with a fury beside which the wrath of the Numidians and the mutterings of the Parthians are mere child's play. They are secretly nourishing preposterous hopes and madly pre-meditating our ruin. How can it be otherwise, when, on the strength of an oracle, they are living in expectation of the coming of a Prince of their own blood whose kingdom shall extend over the whole of the earth? There are no half measures with such a people. They must be exterminated. Jerusalem must be laid waste to the very foundation. Perchance, old as I am, it may be granted me to behold the day when her walls shall fall and the flames shall envelop her houses, when her inhabitants shall pass under the edge of the sword, when salt shall be strewn on the place where once the temple stood. And in that day, I shall at length be justified." — Anatole France, *Procurator of Judaea.*

69 "And you yourself Pontius, have seen perish beneath the cudgels of your legionaries simple-minded men who have died for a cause they believed to be just without revealing their names. Such men do not deserve our contempt. I am saying this because it is desirable in all things to preserve moderation and an even mind. But I own that I never experienced any lively sympathy for the Jews." — Anatole France, *Procurator of Judaea.*

70 Konrad Z. Lorenz, *King Solomon's Ring,* 1955, pp. 186-87.

71 *Ibid,* p. 194.

72 *Ibid,* pp. 195-96.

73 Gandhiji quoted in Radhakrishnan, *Great Indians,* Bombay, 1956, p. 42.

74 *Harijan,* July 28, 1940, p. 227.

75 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events,* London, 1947, p. 75.

76 *Ibid,* p. 89.

77 *Young India,* May 25, 1921, p. 165.

78 *Harijan*, May 16, 1936, p. 109.

79 *Harijan*, December 24, 1938, pp. 394-95.

80 Gerald Heard, *Pain, Sex and Time*, London, 1939, p. 258.

81 *Ibid.*

82 See Pyarelal, *Pilgrimage for Peace*, Ahmedabad, 1950, pp. 157-60.

83 *Harijan*, August 11, 1940, p. 241.

84 *Harijan*, September 26, 1936, p. 260.

85 *Harijan*, July 28, 1940, p. 219.

86 *Harijan*, July 21, 1940, p. 213.

87 *Ibid*, p. 210.

88 *Ibid.*

89 *Harijan*, November 12, 1938, pp. 326-27.

90 *Harijan*, December 24, 1938, pp. 394-95.

91 *Ibid.*

92 *Young India*, August 11, 1920, p. 3.

93 Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, London, 1951, p. 172.

94 *Harijan*, September 24, 1938, p. 266.

95 H. S. Canby (ed.), *The Works of Thoreau*, Boston, 1946, pp. 788-89.

96 *Harijan*, August 25, 1940, p. 260.

97 C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London, 1947, p. 82.

GLOSSARY

Abala: the weaker sex.

Adulsa: an Indian fruit with medicinal properties used as a cough-cure.

Advaita: monism.

Ahimsa: non-violence; love.

Akhand: united; undivided.

Amlaki: gooseberry.

Arati: ceremony of adoration by encircling the head of the object adored by lights.

Asan: altar cloth; a small carpet.

Ashram: a retreat or home for community living.

Asthis: pieces of half-burnt bones collected from a funeral pyre.

Asuras: by nature evil; demons.

Avatar: incarnation.

Batabi lebu: a variety of big sour limes.

Belchas: spades.

Bhangi: a sweeper or scavenger.

Bhadralog class: middle class.

Bidi: Indian cigarettes.

Brahmacharya: observance of chastity or continence in the quest for God.

Charkha: spinning-wheel.

Chela: disciple.

Chhoba: coconut oil-cake.

Chittasuddhi: purification of the senses.

Dacoity: brigandage.

Dao: a heavy curved knife universally used in East Bengal.

Dargah: Muslim shrine.

Daridra-narayan: God incarnated as poor.

Darshan: sight; inner vision.

Dharma: duty; law.

Dhoti: loin cloth; a long piece of cloth worn by Indians.

Dili: rooted in the heart.

Diwan: Chief Minister of the ruler of an Indian State before independence.

Dosti: friendship.

Dosuti: cloth made from doubled yarn.

Fakir: a Muslim recluse.

Fateha: opening Chapter of Koran; also Muslim funeral prayer.

Firman: a royal decree; an ordinance.

Gadi: throne.

Ganja: Indian hemp; an intoxicant drug.

Ghee: clarified butter.

Ghrita Kumari: aloes.

Goonda: hooligan; anti-social elements.

Gramdan: donation of the whole village by the collective decision of the villagers concerned.

Guru: teacher.

Hamal: porter.

Harijan: literally child of God; a name coined by Gandhiji to describe the so-called untouchables.

Haritki: myrobalan.

Hats: village markets.

Himsa: violence.

Imam: leader of the Muslim prayer.

Jai: victory.

Jalpai: an Indian variety of olives.

Jehad: religious crusade.

Jirga: tribal council.

Juloom: oppression; tyranny; Bengali for *zoolam*.

Kafir: infidel.

Karma: actions.

Khadi or Khaddar: hand-spun and hand-woven cloth.

Kharif: autumn crop.

Khichri: a hotch-potch of rice and pulses and/or vegetables.

Khilafat: the institution of the Khalifa, the theocratic head of the Muslim world.

Khudai Khidmatgars: servants of God, i.e. servants of humanity.

Kirpan: a miniature dagger; the religious symbol of the Sikhs.

Kirtan: singing hymns in praise of God.

Kisan: peasant.

Kripa: grace.

Lathi: a wooden staff or stick.

Lok Sevak Sangh: association for the service of humanity.

Ma-Bap : literally mother and father. Sometimes applied to a benevolent authoritarian Government.

Machka: coconut butter or cream.

Mahat: Universal Essence.

Moksha: salvation.

Mal: the belt-drive in a spinning-wheel, made from twisted yarn.

Mali: a gardener; in Noakhali dialect a sweeper.

Malaun: accursed.

Mantra: sacred verse.

Maund: Indian weight, equivalent to 82 lbs.

Nama: the name.

Namaskar: salutation with folded hands.

Neem: name of an Indian tree known for its blood purifying and antiseptic qualities.

Niyamas: rules.

Nullah: torrent bed.

Panchayat: village council consisting of five persons elected by the people.

Panchayat Raj: administration through Panchayat, i.e. the people.

Pandal: canvas awning for a public function.

Pak: pure.

Pran-pratistha: sanctification ceremony accompanying the installation of the image of a deity.

Prasad: sacrament distributed at the end of a religious service.

Punya: religious merit.

Purda: veil.

Raj: Government.

Ramadhun: devotional chanting of God's name.

Ramanama: the name of Rama — incarnation of God in Hindu religion.

Rentio: spinning-wheel (Gujarati).

Rishis: sages; seers.

Sacchakriya: act of truth.

Sadhna: striving; practice.

Sadhu: a recluse; mendicant.

Sampatti-dan: donation of wealth.

Samya: equality.

Sandesh: sweets.

Sanatani: orthodox.

Sangam: confluence.

Sari: a long piece of cloth worn by Indian women.

Sarkar: ruler; chief.

Sat: Being; Ultimate Reality.

Satyagraha: literally holding on to truth; truth-force or soul-force.

Satyagrahi: one who practises Satyagraha.

Saumya: benignity.

Seer: Indian weight, roughly equivalent to 2 lbs.

Shanti Sena: peace brigade.

Shariat: Islamic law.

Shastri: one who has mastered the Shastras — Hindu scriptures.

Shati: a variety of tuber.

Sufism: Islamic cult of mysticism.

Surajya: good Government.

Swadharma: one's natural avocation; the inner law of one's being.

Swadeshi: literally of one's own country. In economics the doctrine of preferential use of the products of one's own country.

Swaraj: self-rule; independence.

Takli: distaff or twirligig used for spinning cotton or wool.

Tal: rhythmic beating of time with hands during singing.

Tapasya or Tapashcharya: austerity or penance.

Thakur: deity.

Thana: police station.

Thanedar: in charge of a police station.

Tonga: a two-wheeled horse driven carriage.

Tongawallas: Tonga drivers.

Tunai: the process of carding cotton with fingers.

Upasana: worship.

Urs: fair.

Yadavas: the dynasty of Yadus from which Lord Krishna descended.

Vaishnava: votary of the cult of Vishnu.

Yamas: the five cardinal disciplines of Truth, Non-violence, non-stealing, self-restraint and non-possession.

Yavanas: aliens; barbarians.

Zamindar: a landlord.

INDEX

[Short forms used in the Index are G. for Gandhiji, C.A. for Constituent Assembly, J. for Jinnah and M.L. for Muslim League.]